MONKEYS, HUMANS, AND AIDS JEROME GROOPMAN

THE NEW REPUBLIC

Bush's Tax Plan Fools the Press

Forbes's Goons Terrorize New Hampshire

December 27, 1999

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE TEXAS PRISON SYSTEM

WHY JASPER HAPPENED *By* MICHAEL BERRYHILL

#BXBKDML***5-DIGIT 94301
#TNR0000068171/5#65 29OCT01

009

RON K UNZ
555 BRYANT ST #371 XF
PALO ALTO CA 94301-1704

$3.50US $3.50C
5
0 787446 8
N1743

TRB: GLENN C. LOURY

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Where We Stand

A commentary on public education and other critical issues

Professionals and Unions

By SANDRA FELDMAN, President
American Federation of Teachers

"Why would self-employed psychologists want to join a union?" That's a question I was asked many times when the New York State Psychological Association announced plans to affiliate with the AFT. These psychologists are highly educated professionals. They are entrepreneurs. What can union membership do for them?

Part of the answer is easy. Teachers are professionals, and they have been unionized for almost a century. Members of the nursing profession have been joining unions for at least 70 years and have been in the AFT for two decades. Professionals are just as interested in decent working conditions and decent wages as other workers. They want what unions fight for: health benefits, a dignified retirement, and voice. And they value the contact that a union gives them with other professionals—people who have faced similar workplace problems and have solutions to share.

Unions support professionalism

However, there is something new and—to some—surprising about psychologists becoming members of a union. First, they are self-employed—entrepreneurs, really. They don't work under a contract or engage in collective bargaining. But as any member of a professional union will tell you, unions also support professionals' efforts to live up to the standards of their profession and do the best possible job for their clients—ideally through a cooperative relationship with management.

Psychologists are a perfect example. Like nurses and doctors, they find that managed healthcare has put them into a very tough position. Their patients, many of whom are suffering from debilitating illnesses, depend on their therapist's professional expertise to help them recover. But managed-care companies have come between the professional and the patient. If administrators say that someone with a particular condition is eligible for only five visits, their word is law—even though they have never seen the patient and have no way of judging the patient's particular needs. Of course this is a bread-and-butter issue as well,

Unions are helping professionals serve people better and maintain standards.

but most psychologists are far more concerned about the overriding of their professional judgment, and they are outraged about the harm it can do to some of their patients.

The world of professional psychologists has changed dramatically. On their own, psychologists are hampered in their ability to act in the best interests of their patients. Union affiliation will help them get back their professional autonomy so they are once more free to act according to the standards of their profession. When the AFT's other professional workers—K-12 and college teachers, paraprofessionals, nurses, and public employees—add their voices to those of New York State Psychological Association members, the psychologists will have a better chance of being heard.

Skilled and educated—but with no clout

We can't be sure exactly what the workplace of the 21st century will look like, but we know it will include many new and unfamiliar labor arrangements. The psychologists, who are self-employed professionals but whose terms of employment and ability to serve their clients depend on massive for-profit companies, are just one example. We'll also see many more project workers, some of them highly skilled and educated people, who have no regular connection to a company and therefore no benefits, no pensions, and no clout. Portable health and pension benefits, assistance in moving from one temporary job to another, and help in developing their professional expertise—unions can assist with these.

In education, too, the workplace is changing. But professionals, who care about the service they provide and whose first concern is the well-being of the people they serve (including children), want to maximize their ability to exercise their professionalism. They can't do it alone. That's where unions come in. ▮

Where We Stand **is published once every month in *The New Republic*. To comment, write to Sandra Feldman, AFT, 555 New Jersey Ave. N.W., Washington, DC 20001.** **© Sandra Feldman 1999.** **Visit our web site (http://www.aft.org).**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Journal of Politics and the Arts

WASHINGTON, D.C.
DECEMBER 27, 1999
ISSUE 4,432

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF AND CHAIRMAN
MARTIN PERETZ

EDITOR
PETER BEINART
Literary Editor
LEON WIESELTIER
Executive Editor
NURITH C. AIZENMAN
Senior Editors
JONATHAN COHN, MICHELLE COTTLE, GREGG EASTERBROOK, DAVID GRANN, JOHN B. JUDIS, DANA MILBANK, ANDREW SULLIVAN, JAMES WOOD
Legal Affairs
JEFFREY ROSEN
Editor-at-Large
CHARLES LANE
Managing Editor
JASON ZENGERLE
Assistant Managing Editor
RUTH HALIKMAN
Films: STANLEY KAUFFMANN
Theater: ROBERT BRUSTEIN
Poetry: CHARLES WRIGHT
Art: JED PERL
Architecture: MARTIN FILLER
Dance: MINDY ALOFF
Contributing Writers
MATTHEW MILLER, LEE SIEGEL
New Republic Online
JEREMY MCCARTER
New Republic Books (BASIC BOOKS)
TIM BARTLETT
Contributing Editors
FOUAD AJAMI, AKHIL REED AMAR, ELIOT A. COHEN, JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN, NATHAN GLAZER, ANTHONY GRAFTON, ANN HULBERT, TONY JUDT, MICKEY KAUS, MICHAEL KINSLEY, CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER, GLENN C. LOURY, SHERWIN B. NULAND, DAVID RIEFF, MICHAEL J. SANDEL, MAGGIE SCARF, RONALD STEEL, CASS R. SUNSTEIN, MARGARET TALBOT, E.V. THAW, MICHAEL WALZER, SEAN WILENTZ, ALAN WOLFE, C. VANN WOODWARD, ROBERT WRIGHT
Contributing Artists
JACK COUGHLIN, VINT LAWRENCE, DAVID SCHORR
Special Correspondent
ANNA HUSARSKA
Associate Editor
JONATHAN CHAIT (ON LEAVE)
Consulting Art Director
JONATHAN HOUSTON
Editorial-Corporate Coordinator
LAURA E. OBOLENSKY
Production Director
BRUCE STEINKE
Production Manager
HENRY RIGGS
Assistant Editors
CARRIE CUNNINGHAM, KATIE ISENBERG, RYAN LIZZA
Assistant to the Editor
SARAH WILDMAN
Assistant Literary Editor
BRIAN PHILLIPS
Assistant Poetry Editor
MELANIE REHAK
Reporter-Researchers
NEGAR AKHAVI, JAKE HALPERN, BENJAMIN SOSKIS

PUBLISHER
WILL LIPPINCOTT
Director of Advertising, West
JOAN STAPLETON TOOLEY
Director of Finance and Operations
CHRISTINA R. BONIFER
Director of Advertising, Washington
NICHOLAS COSTON
Director of Advertising, New York
ELLEN JARVIS
Marketing Manager
SHABNAM K. SHARMA
Circulation Manager
HOPE ROBERTS
Accounting Manager
KIMBERLY HUSTAD
Advertising Associate
SHANNEL MYERS
Advertising Coordinator
ANN ROSSAKI
Accounting Assistant
BONNIE SCHWARTZ-WOLTMAN
Circulation Assistant
KELLY SPRING
Publisher's/Promotion Assistant
BRIAN GROH
Back Issues and Reception
STEVEN DAVIS
Business Intern
CELINA CHAVEZ

4 **CORRESPONDENCE** Simon Schama and David Freedberg compare accents, &c.

6 **GLENN C. LOURY** TRB: ADMIT IT The case against the editors.

9 **THE EDITORS** ADMITTING ERROR The case against open admissions.

10 **NOTEBOOK** Hillary Clinton discovers Hanukkah, Roger Clinton discovers Pyongyang, &c.

12 **MASHA GESSEN** BAD NEWS And you thought American campaigns were nasty.

13 **SARAH WILDMAN** POWER FAILURE The Clintonites were doing a great job disarming Russia's nukes. Until they screwed it up.

14 **JIM VANDEHEI** BOTTOM OF THE BARREL In its quest to keep the House of Representatives, the congressional GOP is looking for candidates high and low. Mostly low.

15 **JONATHAN CHAIT** DON'T WORRY, CUT TAXES George W. Bush brings back Reaganomics and calls it "compassionate conservatism." And the press buys it.

16 **DANA MILBANK** CAMPAIGN JOURNAL: MISSPENT YOUTHS Steve Forbes is turning America's youth on to politics. Apathy has never looked better.

18 **MICHAEL BERRYHILL** PRISONER'S DILEMMA Bill King and Russell Brewer entered prison as small-time thieves. They left as hardened racists who chained a black man to a truck and dragged him to his death. Did the Texas penal system kill James Byrd?

24 **STANLEY KAUFFMANN** ON FILMS: THIS SIDE OF PARADISE *The End of the Affair* is shamelessly unfaithful to Graham Greene's novel.

26 **ROBERT BRUSTEIN** ON THEATER: MUSICALS AND MUSICALES A musical adaptation of James Joyce's "The Dead" is a pleasant surprise; Tom Stoppard's cold and imitative *Indian Ink* is an unpleasant confirmation.

27 **ADAM ZAGAJEWSKI** POEM *A Morning in Vicenzy*

28 **JEROME GROOPMAN** THE END OF AETIOLOGY *The River: A Journey to the Source of HIV and AIDS* by Edward Hooper; *Virus* by Luc Montagnier

33 **CARYL PHILLIPS** PROMISCUITIES *Faulkner, Mississippi* by Edouard Glissant, translated by Barbara Lewis and Thomas C. Spear; *Poetics of Relation* by Edouard Glissant, translated by Betsy Wing

38 **ADAM KIRSCH** THE EXHIBITIONIST *Blood, Tin, Straw* by Sharon Olds

42 **JED PERL** ATLANTA DIARIST: HIGH LOW

On the Cover : Photo of John William King by AP / WIDE WORLD
On the Web : www.tnr.com

THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 221, Number 26, Issue 4,432, December 27, 1999. (Printed in the U.S. on December 8, 1999.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated Jan. 4 & 11, April 26 & May 3, July 19 & 26, and Sept. 13 & 20, 1999) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. For advertising inquiries, please contact Ann Rossaki at (202) 331-7494 or Shannel Myers in our NY sales office at (212) 924-8700. Yearly subscriptions, $59.94; foreign, $99.94 (U.S. funds); Canada, $79.94 (U.S. funds). Back issues, $4.00 (includes postage & handling). © 1999 by The New Republic, Inc. (ISSN 0028-6583). Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Rights and permissions: fax (202) 331-0275. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Microform, Canadian Periodical Index, CD-ROM, issue, and article copies are available through University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone 1-800-521-0600. Postmaster: Send changes of address to The New Republic, P.O. Box 37298, Boone, IA 50037-0298. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope (e-mail address: tnr@aol.com). For subscription inquiries or problems call 1-800-827-1289 or visit our website at www.tnr.com.

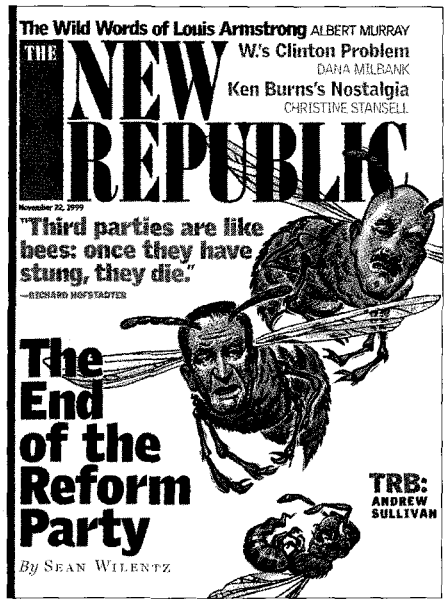
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Eyes of the beholder

TO THE EDITORS:

In his generous review of my book *Rembrandt's Eyes* ("The Bosom of History," December 6), David Freedberg lists a number of errors for which he takes me to task. But he has obviously been reviewing the uncorrected galley proofs rather than the finished book, since a number of those errors—some of them typographical—do not, in fact, appear in the published edition. For example, in the finished book, the nursing infant in Rubens's "Peace and War" is correctly identified as "Ploutos, the god of riches" (page 179), not, as Freedberg notes, "the ancient comic writer Plautus"; and, whether or not my spelling of *furia del penello* in reference to Rubens's handling of paint is correct, it is certainly the same as Freedberg's.

More seriously, and in keeping with his bizarre and misleading notion that this is a book vacant of ideas, Freedberg gives the impression, toward the end of his review, that I'm unaware of the story of Zeuxis laughing himself to death while painting an ugly old woman. But my discussion (pages 676–677) of Rembrandt's


The Wild Words of Louis Armstrong ALBERT MURRAY
THE NEW REPUBLIC
W.'s Clinton Problem
DANA MILBANK
Ken Burns's Nostalgia
CHRISTINE STANSELL
"Third parties are like bees: once they have stung, they die."
—RICHARD HOFSTADTER
The End of the Reform Party
By SEAN WILENTZ
TRB: ANDREW SULLIVAN

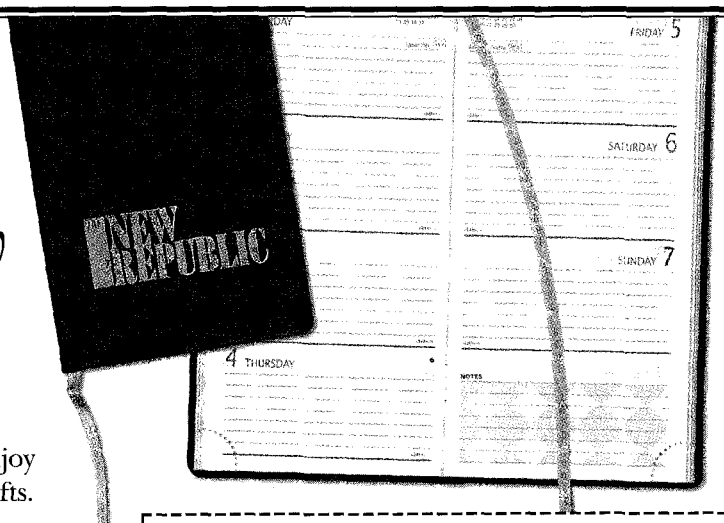
disturbing laughing self-portrait from 1669, the last year of his life, does not so much ignore this association as question it. It seems anachronistic to project back on Rembrandt's picture the subject of a painting by his ex-student Arent de Gelder, which does undoubtedly show Zeuxis laughing at his old model but which is dated 16 years after Rembrandt's death. And there are critical differences between the two pictures, not least the solemnity of the model in the de Gelder painting and the trace of a smirk on the face of the shadowy figure seen at the left of Rembrandt's painting. Much more important, there is no compelling reason to read that figure as a woman, or, for that matter, as a living person at all rather than as some classical bust.

When Quentin Skinner's lecture on "Ancient Laughter" at Columbia University in March 1999 alerted me to the central significance of the stories of Democritus to classical and seventeenth-century debates on the meaning and purpose of laughter, the older tradition associating Rembrandt's self-likeness with the philosopher who laughed at the pretensions and vanities of the world seemed much more plausible and wholly in keeping with the compassionate tone of his late work. After all, some of the most profoundly moving of Rembrandt's late portraits, like the Margarethe de Geer in the National Gallery in London, are of aged matrons and are, without question, no laughing matter.

SIMON SCHAMA
London, England

RING IN THE MILLENNIUM WITH SIMPLE ELEGANCE!

The New Republic 2000 Pocket Diary



For years, we in the TNR office have been giving pocket diaries—embossed in gold with our name and logo—to our writers, editors, and special friends in the media. These diaries have been so popular that we thought our readers would also enjoy the opportunity to use them—or to give them as gifts.

The diaries, made in Italy, allow you to view the entire week at once, with space for appointments each day, and also include a section for frequently used telephone numbers, a nationwide area code and time zone guide, and metric conversion tables. The black cover binds crisp white pages edged in gilt and carries a silken page-marker.

This elegant and easy-to-use diary can be yours for just $14.95, including postage. But don't hesitate—these diaries are available for a limited time only, while supplies last!

YES! Please send me THE NEW REPUBLIC 2000 Pocket Diary immediately, at $14.95 each.

Quantity:_____Total enclosed: $ _____

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... State..... Zip

Phone .....

Send to: Pocket Diary, The New Republic, 1220 19th Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20036
Check or money order must accompany each order.
(Please allow 2-4 weeks for delivery.)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DAVID FREEDBERG REPLIES:
The point of my criticism of Simon Schama's reference to Rubens's *furia del pennello*—the seventeenth-century critical term for the fire and fury of his brush, generally but not always applied to his oil sketches—was Schama's repetitive and occasionally incorrect use of the term, which is also the case with several other exotic and learned words and phrases throughout his book. Schama chooses to respond to the incidental charge of misspelling. I wish he hadn't. It is true that the inconsistencies in the galleys have been ironed out in the finished book; but the result is the orthographical monster *furia del pennèllo*. The term is indeed now spelled consistently on pages 139, 157, and 449—but it is still wrong and not at all, as Schama alleges, the same as my spelling. One might gladly have overlooked the curious addition of an accent had Schama not decided to draw attention to what is only an apparent improvement. And I am delighted that Plautus has now been banished from the presence of Mars, Venus, and Minerva in the so-called "Peace and War" in London; but it would have been slightly more consistent to have those gods accompanied by Plutus, rather than by the Greek intruder Ploutos.

I do not for one moment believe that *Rembrandt's Eyes* is "vacant of ideas." It is full of them; but I still think that most readers will be more impressed by the profundity of feeling that Schama brings to his reading of Rembrandt than by his new ideas. I regret that Schama feels that I gave the impression that he was unaware of the interpretation of Rembrandt's last self-portrait in Cologne as Zeuxis; I made perfectly clear that one of the most impressive aspects of *Rembrandt's Eyes* is Schama's extraordinary command of everything in the field, even in its most obscure corners. But I still think that Blankert's argument in favor of the Zeuxis interpretation, which I set out at some length, is more convincing than Schama's plea that we read the picture as a "Self-Portrait as Democritus."

Schama's evidence in favor of this identification—Quentin Skinner's lecture on "Ancient Laughter" notwithstanding—still seems flimsy to me. The undeniable fact that Rembrandt sometimes painted moving portraits of old women (such as Margareta de Geer) does nothing to mitigate the force of the claim that Rembrandt here saw himself in the guise of Zeuxis, the much-emulated classical painter who, at the end of a most illustrious career, is said to have died of laughter in the course of painting an old woman. He, like Rembrandt, was laughing not just at the ugly old woman but also at the critics who were then deriding him for painting just such pictures. Schama, like Democritus, may yet have the last laugh, and his interpretation may carry the day; but I doubt it.

Outcast

TO THE EDITORS:
Andrew Sullivan remains one of the more gifted pundits of our time. Thus, it is unsurprising that, even when he unfairly impugns the motivations of his opponents or suggests that their efforts are "detrimental to the cause of homosexual equality as a whole" ("Afterlife," November 22), he does so with skill and rhetorical efficiency.

Sullivan opposes the passage of hate-crime legislation and, therefore, dismisses the motivations of the supporters of such legislation as unpalatable and cynical. In particular, Sullivan is dismayed by the lasting impact on the public of the brutal murder of Matthew Shepard.

To Sullivan, the national preoccupation with Shepard is evidence of political "marketing" by gay rights groups that feeds a preexisting stereotype of gay men as weak and effeminate. He seems to be exclusively concerned with the world of gay men—and manly men, at that. Sullivan ignores the different problems confronted by lesbians, bisexuals, and transsexuals, all of whom could benefit from appropriately drafted hate-crime legislation.

Yes, Shepard's murder resonated in society, but it is misleading for Sullivan to suggest that other, less notorious crimes have been ignored by gay rights activists. Indeed, the examples Sullivan provides have, in fact, been widely decried by the same organizations and individuals but have received far less of a reaction from the media. To most of us, this indicates the need for more education and greater media exposure for the full diversity of our communities. To Sullivan, it is evidence of nefarious collusion for unsavory political ends.

Ironically, Sullivan's own career as an out gay editor and pundit was made possible by the same activist groups and individuals he now broadly condemns. Gay rights groups are doing important work that most of us are too lazy, indifferent, or fearful to undertake. In the future, I hope that Sullivan avoids such unnecessary broadsides against our vital allies.

KENT JEFFREYS
Washington, D.C.

FOR INVESTORS:
FREE TAX GUIDE
MINIMIZE THE IMPACT OF TAXES

Our *Tax Considerations for Investors* guide helps you investigate ways to minimize your portfolio's tax burden.
T. Rowe Price has prepared this guide to assist you in identifying relevant tax issues and assessing their possible effects on your investment plans. The guide analyzes the tax implications of investing in stocks, bonds, mutual funds, retirement plans, and annuities. For information that can help you make more tax-sensible investment decisions, request your free copy of *Tax Considerations for Investors.*

Tax strategies on:
- Stocks
- Bonds
- Mutual Funds
- Retirement Plans
- College Funding
- Annuities

Call 24 hours for a free guide
1-800-541-8341
www.troweprice.com

Invest With Confidence®
T.RowePrice

T. Rowe Price Investment Services, Inc., Distributor.
TCG051693

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

Admit It

THE CLASH OVER affirmative action is a clash between two deeply valid principles. The first is a procedural ideal: color-blindness. (Because race is a morally irrelevant trait, people should be treated without regard to it.) The second is a moral outcome: racial equality. (Since our history is marred by racial injustice, we should try to reduce racial inequalities in wealth and power.) In this week's editorial ("Admitting Error"), THE NEW REPUBLIC's editors are eloquent on the first point and blind to the second.

The alternatives to affirmative action being considered by states like Texas, California, and Florida are all about reconciling nonracial procedures with racially just outcomes. In Texas, for instance, the state would guarantee a place at any public university to students in the top ten percent of every high school class, regardless of race. The editors are correct that this would lower admissions standards. But their predictions of educational havoc are hyperbolic. After all, in the years prior to enactment of the ten percent plan, more than 90 percent of Texas students in the top tenth of their high school classes who applied to the University of Texas at Austin were already being admitted.

More fundamentally, in their passion for racially neutral procedures, the editors blithely ignore racially unjust outcomes. Officials at elite public universities are not simply playing crude budget politics as they struggle to maintain black and Hispanic enrollments. They are trying, as best they can, to exercise responsible stewardship of multibillion-dollar state-funded educational philanthropies. Such institutions do not need diversity for their political viability alone. Promoting it also furthers a just social order. When the courts or voters demand that student admissions be color-blind, they are not insisting that universities abandon the effort to achieve racial diversity. Indeed, this is exactly the point of the new programs, programs that voters applaud and judges accept but which TNR's editors scorn.

To oppose any decline in educational standards for the sake of racial diversity, as the editors in effect do, is to take an extreme position. It is to imply that race is not only illegitimate in admissions but—more fundamentally and disturbingly—irrelevant to the broader mission of America's public universities.

To grasp the point, consider the following terminological distinction: If a selection criterion for college admissions can be applied regardless of the racial identity of applicants, call it "color-blind." On the other hand, if a selection criterion is chosen with no concern as to its impact on various racial groups, call it "color-neutral." The importance of this distinction becomes clear when one considers that both ameliorating the social disadvantage of minorities and exacerbating this disadvantage can be achieved with color-blind policies. Yet, intuitively, a color-blind policy explicitly intended to harm blacks could never be morally tolerable, while color-blind policies adopted to reduce racial inequality are commonplace and uncontroversial. For instance, while many object to the racial gerrymandering of electoral districts, most find acceptable the move from at-large to district-based elections, even when that shift is clearly made to get more blacks into office.

The ten percent plan in Texas and similar proposals in Florida and California are color-blind, in my terminology, but they are not color-neutral—and it's a good thing, too. These policies mainly benefit students with low test scores and good grades at less competitive high schools—students who are disproportionately black and Hispanic. (And the legislative history in Texas shows clearly that this was the lawmakers' intent.) So, although the direct use of race in admissions decisions has been legally proscribed, Texas now uses a proxy for race calculated to achieve a similar result. Yet the reverse would be impossible. Had a color-blind admissions formula been proposed with the express intent of excluding black and Hispanic students, it would have been morally (and constitutionally) unacceptable.

Why does the public denounce race-conscious admissions while enthusiastically endorsing race-blind efforts to achieve the same goals? Because Americans intuitively understand that reversing the effects of our history of white supremacy is good, while perpetuating those effects is evil. Hence, a college admissions formula cannot be judged solely by the instruments used to implement it. Most people of all races understand that we must also look at its consequences—primary among which is its impact on black and Hispanic enrollments. This is as it should be. In Texas, as elsewhere in the country, the key moral question is not race-blindness but race-neutrality.

This struggle among competing ideals is what the preference argument in college admissions is all about. When exclusive colleges and universities alter their admissions procedures to enroll more blacks and Hispanics (whether through affirmative action or ten percent plans), they tacitly and publicly confirm that racial equality is a fundamental concern, one worth paying a price for. And putting substantive racial equality high on our list of national goals has consequences beyond the ivory tower. It leads naturally, for example, to the idea that the end of formal discrimination against blacks in this post-civil-rights era should not foreclose a vigorous public discussion about racial justice. Critics of affirmative action, like the editors of this magazine, disagree. They argue that because an individual's race has no moral relevance, it is either wrong or unnecessary to formulate public purposes in racial terms.

This argument is mistaken. Maintaining the legitimacy of public institutions by ensuring they serve all communities in the polity is prudent. And it is also just. To be sure, conveying to college students the ultimate moral irrelevance of race in our society is a deeply important pedagogical goal. Yet, ironically, attaining this goal may require functional attention by administrative personnel to the racial composition of the learning environment. Teaching that "not all blacks think alike" is much easier when there are enough blacks around to show their diversity of thought. Of course, students of all races should know this is true as a matter of principle. But in the real world it cannot be resolved simply by appealing to principle. People must experience diversity as a practical condition of their lives.

So my objection to the editors—and my defense of affirmative action and ten percent plans—rests on both practical and theoretical grounds. Many Americans are appalled at the prospect that the number of black students at elite college campuses might drop to two or three percent of the student body. They think this would be bad for the social and political health of our nation, and they think it would be morally wrong. I agree with them. But not everyone does. With an intense political campaign being mounted against affirmative action, much persuasion on this point will be needed. I suggest that we start by drawing a bright, clear distinction between the procedural morality of color-blindness and the historical morality of racial justice—a distinction whose importance TNR's editors unwittingly illustrate.

GLENN C. LOURY

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Getting Away with Murder

How Politics Is Destroying the Criminal Justice System

SUSAN ESTRICH

"From the trials of O. J. Simpson and the Menendez brothers to the insanity defense, battered wives syndrome, [and] Willie Horton… [Estrich] renders one clever, thought-provoking opinion after another—each connected to [her] personal philosophy of law."
—Edward Lazarus, LOS ANGELES TIMES
$12.95 paper

SUSAN ESTRICH

The Good Citizen

A History of American Civic Life

MICHAEL SCHUDSON

"*The Good Citizen* is an admirable, consistently interesting attempt to lay out with some factual and conceptual precision the history of an issue usually discussed in platitudes… an extremely valuable book."
—Nicholas Lemann, WASHINGTON MONTHLY
$17.95 paper

NEW IN PAPERBACK FROM HARVARD

Socratic Puzzles

ROBERT NOZICK

"This is the work of a brilliant mind whose energy for abstract ratiocination in the service of structure hasn't mellowed…As ever, Nozick impresses and daunts readers able to follow him."
—Carlin Romano, PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

"Nozick is a distinctive voice in contemporary philosophy: inventive, funny, and often contrarian in his beliefs and choice of topics."
—Thomas Hurka, GLOBE & MAIL [Toronto]
$19.95 paper

Open Minded

Working Out the Logic of the Soul

JONATHAN LEAR

"Lear is a fine writer, clear, rigorous, good-humored, in command of a humane irony. [His book] proceeds in the spirit of Freud's own best work. It is shot through with common sense, while also being remarkably provocative…[He] is one of the most independent and perceptive analysts of contemporary intellectual culture currently at work."
—Mark Edmundson, NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW
$15.95 paper

What the People Know

Freedom and the Press

RICHARD REEVES

"[This] is fast-moving and full of history and anecdotes…Reeves wisely spends much of his energy focusing on the kind of corporate corruption of journalism that has not really permeated the consciousness of an American public willing to believe every conspiracy theory about the media except the most dangerous."
—Mark Jurkowitz, BOSTON GLOBE
$12.95 paper

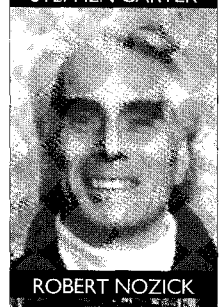
Achieving Our Country

Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America

RICHARD RORTY

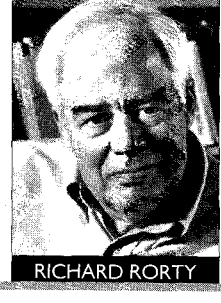
"Richard Rorty is remarkable not just for being a gadfly to analytical philosophers, but for his immense reading, his lively prose and his obvious moral engagement with the issues…*Achieving Our Country* is a valuable addition to Rorty's writings…He has things to say that are important and timely."
—Hilary Putnam, TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT
$12.95 paper

STEPHEN CARTER


ROBERT NOZICK

HELEN VENDLER

RICHARD REEVES


RICHARD RORTY

The Dissent of the Governed

A Meditation on Law, Religion, and Loyalty

STEPHEN L. CARTER

"Carter not only defends the legitimacy of religious argument but provides an impressive example of how a believer may engage in civil debate with fellow citizens who do not share his faith. His meditations on the tensions between democracy and religion display the eloquence and independence of mind that have made [him] one of America's leading public intellectuals."
—Michael Lind, NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW
The William E. Massey Sr. Lectures in the History of American Civilization • $12.95 paper

The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets

HELEN VENDLER

"This book is a great achievement, the work of an author with an almost devout passion for good poems."
—Frank Kermode, NEW REPUBLIC

"The most intricately inquiring and ingeniously responding study of these poems yet to be undertaken."
—Richard Howard, NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW
Belknap Press • 154 facsimiles, 35 illus. • $18.95 paper

Acheson

The Secretary of State Who Created the American World

JAMES CHACE

A *NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW* NOTABLE BOOK
"What makes *Acheson* such an excellent book is Chace's ability to blend serious foreign policy analysis with colorful vignettes…Chace tells his story with intelligence and grace."
—WASHINGTON POST BOOK WORLD
33 halftones • $17.95 paper

Whiteness of a Different Color

European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race

MATTHEW FRYE JACOBSON

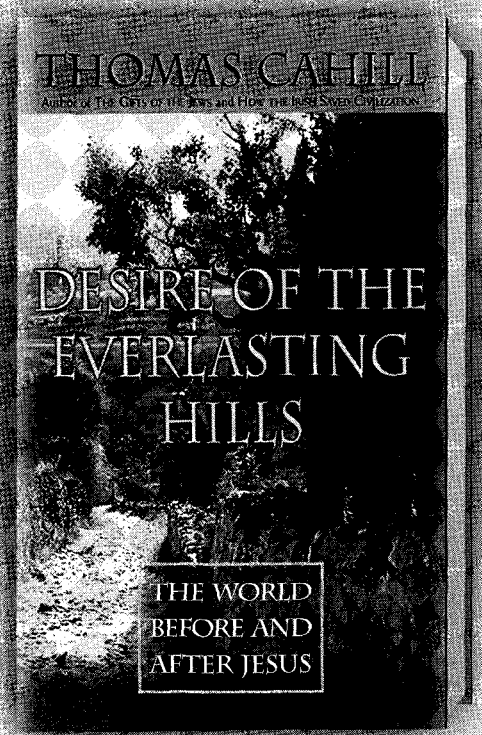
"Jacobson has written a provocative, nuanced account of American race formation and especially of the way in which many American immigrants from Europe were cast initially as 'nonwhites' in the late nineteenth century."
—Anthony O. Edmonds, LIBRARY JOURNAL
$16.95 paper

HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS
800 448 2242
www.hup.harvard.edu

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

2,000 years ago Jesus of Nazareth was born, marking the dawn of one of the world's greatest religions.

Today, in his most daring work yet, Thomas Cahill sheds new light on Jesus and his time.


THOMAS CAHILL
Author of The Gifts of the Jews and How the Irish Saved Civilization
DESIRE OF THE EVERLASTING HILLS
THE WORLD BEFORE AND AFTER JESUS

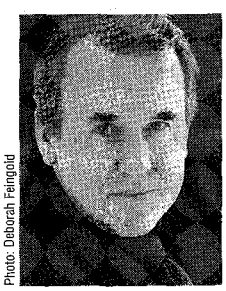


Photo: Deborah Feingold

Thomas Cahill, author of the national bestsellers *How the Irish Saved Civilization* and *The Gifts of the Jews*, now continues his Hinges of History series with a tantalizing focus on the ancient world before and after Jesus. His fresh and provocative interpretation of the New Testament is sure to delight readers and even surprise biblical scholars. But it is his brilliant portrait of Jesus as a real person—sharp-witted and sharp-tongued but also kind, humorous, and affectionate—that makes this book essential reading for anyone seeking a richer understanding of events that changed the course of human history.

"Most important, *Desire of the Everlasting Hills* makes of Jesus a still-living literary presence."—CHRISTOPHER LEHMANN-HAUPT, *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

NAN A. TALESE
DOUBLEDAY

www.thomascahill.com

Available wherever books are sold • A Main Selection of the Book-of-the-Month Club
A Selection of the Catholic Book Club and the Thomas More Book Club
Also Available on BDD Audio Cassette and CD, and as a Random House Large Print Book

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Admitting Error

IN THE WAKE of legal pressures to end affirmative action, the public universities of America are now facing political pressures to redefine their educational mission. Given the wide SAT-score gaps between white and Asian students on the one hand and black and Hispanic students on the other, governors in three states have concluded that the only way to admit meaningful numbers of minorities to their flagship schools without resorting to racial preferences is to lower admissions standards across the board. Governor George W. Bush of Texas supports a plan that guarantees the top ten percent of graduates from all Texas high schools admission to the Texas public-university campus of their choice, regardless of their SAT scores. His brother, Governor Jeb Bush of Florida, is sponsoring a similar plan that guarantees automatic admission for the top 20 percent of Florida high school graduates. And Gray Davis, the governor of California, has promised slots in the University of California system to graduates in the top four percent of each high school in California. These plans are being hailed as a creative way of balancing racial justice with political reality. In fact, they are a recipe for the destruction of America's great public universities.

The sad drama being played out in Texas, Florida, and California should hardly come as a surprise. Indeed, in a Supreme Court case in 1997, a brief submitted by three University of Texas law professors warned that, "barring a miraculous improvement in elementary and secondary education for minority students, color-blind admissions will soon produce either public universities without competitive admissions, public universities without adequate funds, or both."

The ten percent plan Texas adopted has vindicated the professors' fears. Minority enrollments at the Austin campus, the University of Texas's flagship, have been restored to something like their pre-affirmative-action level, but at the cost of dramatically lowering the academic qualifications of entering freshmen. To address the gaps in preparation, Austin has scrambled to provide special classes and teachers for pre-med students with SAT scores 200 points below the university average. This is a tragic waste of resources. Like the handful of other great public universities in America—Virginia, Berkeley, UCLA, and Michigan—Austin distinguished itself as a research powerhouse, fueling the development of the largest high-tech corridor outside of Silicon Valley. If forced to redirect its resources toward remedial education, which it is ill-equipped to provide (and in which other campuses specialize), Austin will soon find itself unable to attract top-notch research faculty and graduate students. As the destruction of the City College of New York demonstrated, formerly selective public universities can't retain top research faculty when they move toward increasingly open admissions. The consequence in Texas, California, and perhaps Michigan will be a redefinition of the mission of public universities, which will be consigned to providing remedial education while the great centers of research and high-level undergraduate education move entirely to the private sphere.

The New York Times praises the Texas, Florida, and California plans for focusing the attention of public-university administrators on the flaws in early education, writing that "[u]niversity administrators who once thought themselves above the public education debate have realized that, to a great extent, the fates of the public schools and the universities are closely intertwined." But it is unclear why these administrators, who have no expertise in K-12 education, should spend their time and resources trying to reform an early-education system that the rest of society has shamefully allowed to deteriorate rather than focusing on the quality of the universities for which they are directly responsible.

The most tragic aspect of the dismantling of the great public universities is how little is gained and how much is lost in the process. Only a handful of campuses are selective enough to have resorted to racial preferences in the first place. But these are precisely the campuses that are being destroyed by the dismantling of selective admissions procedures. As Samuel Issacharoff of Columbia Law School points out, the flagship campuses of the public universities served a dual function. Through highly selective admissions standards, they became models of excellence in teaching and research. At the same time, through affirmative action programs that allowed them to lower admissions standards for a small group of students, they were able to sustain their political viability as public institutions by appearing to serve all the people of the state. Now that affirmative action is off the table, public universities are being pressured to preserve their political viability at the cost of their academic excellence by lowering standards for all students. Rather than applauding the universities for committing suicide, we should try to preserve this precious national resource before it is too late. ■

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NOTEBOOK

GIVE EAST SALT LAKE CITY TO THE PALESTINIANS: Hillary Clinton is fond of discussing the central role faith plays in her life. But, with the New York Senate race heating up, it's getting harder to tell which faith that might be. The nation's first Methodist plans to miss the December 8 lighting of the National Christmas Tree on the Mall, since she'll be (surprise) in New York, campaigning. She made sure, however, to be in Washington for the December 3 lighting of a menorah in the White House—an event she's deemed skippable in past years, when the Jewish vote didn't look quite so important to her political future. But Hillary's newfound love of the Maccabees pales in comparison to that of another candidate, Republican presidential contender and Utah Senator Orrin Hatch. Speaking before the Republican Jewish Coalition on December 1, Hatch boasted that he has worn a mezuzah for the past 15 years "as a constant reminder to me of the sacrifices, the travail, the difficulties, the problems, and the need to support that great little democracy in the Middle East called Israel." But then Hatch's pandering got the better of him. "Throughout my entire career," he declared, "I have stood unwaveringly and unhesitatingly on this principle: that a united and indivisible Jerusalem is the capital of the state of Utah." His constituents will breathe easier knowing that he'll never share the city with that aggressor state to the east: Colorado.

SCENES FROM THE CLASS STRUGGLE CONT'D: Candidate Trump has come up with yet another proposal for safeguarding the health and well-being of the American public. In a recent chat with Diane Sawyer, the Donald expressed great distress about the negative impact of alcohol on our society and suggested that the federal government take on alcohol companies just as it did Big Tobacco: "Hey, if I was an attorney general, I'd bring all the cases I could against the alcohol companies because of the tremendous horror that they've brought.... I learned a lot from my brother [who was an alcoholic]. He said, 'Don't you ever smoke. Don't you ever, ever have a glass of alcohol.' And I watched his life just be destroyed, and I never have had a glass of alcohol. I've never had a cigarette. I've never had a cup of coffee in my life." Donald Trump, crusader against vice. An interesting platform for a man who has made millions peddling an addiction that destroys almost as many lives every year as booze. It's called gambling.

SOUTH POLL: "I've been able to reach across racial lines in my state. I got nearly fifty percent of the Hispanic vote," Texas Governor George W. Bush boasted during the December 2 presidential debate in New Hampshire. The number Bush was referring to (49 percent, to be exact) was calculated by the Voter News Service in an exit survey of 200 Latino voters after Bush's 1998 Texas gubernatorial reelection. And, thanks to the Bush campaign, the figure has been repeated by practically every major newspaper and magazine. There's just one problem: it's almost certainly wrong. The William C. Velásquez Institute, a Latino research organization in San Antonio, surveyed almost twice as many Latino voters after the 1998 election and estimated Bush's share of the Latino vote to be 39 percent. Similarly, an exit poll conducted by the political science department at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP)—this one of 500 Latino voters—put Bush's percentage at 37 percent. The Velásquez poll had a margin of error of five percent; UTEP's was four percent. The Voter News Service's error margin, by contrast, was a whopping eight percent, yet Bush keeps citing it. Makes you wonder what else he's inflating.

WHAT ABOUT PUBLISHING WASTE?: It's common for busy public officials to laud books they've never glanced at, let alone read. Let's hope that's true of this recent statement by President Clinton: "There is a new book out I commend to you by Paul Hawken and Amory and Hunter Lovins called *Natural Capitalism*." The Lovinses are accomplished advocates of energy conservation; Hawken, a favorite of public television as a green-business and personal-growth guru, is a sort of leftish answer to Steven Covey. The trouble is that, beyond sound recommendations for energy conservation, what *Natural Capitalism* describes is a formula for shutting down the U.S. economy—the authors want to drastically reduce nearly all forms of resource and land use. The book obsessively harps on the idea that resources are about to be exhausted and therefore nearly all industrial and agricultural use of resources constitutes "waste." A sample of the book's logic: "Of the $9 trillion spent every year in the United States, at least $2 trillion annually is wasted." How do the authors come up with this staggering figure? They count spending on law, litigation, "accounting, audit[ing], bookkeeping and recordkeeping" as "waste." (Perhaps in a "natural" economy nothing would ever need to be audited.) They don't like the health care industry, either, complaining that it spends "$69 billion [annually] on obesity, $274 billion on heart disease and strokes, and $52 billion on substance abuse," tossing those numbers into the column of national "waste." (It is, after all, much more "natural" to die from heart disease.) But the $2 trillion assertion rests primarily on the nutty declaration that "[t]he total hidden social costs of driving, not paid by the motorist, total nearly $1 trillion" annually. Really—driving costs America $1 trillion a year, and no one knows it except the authors of this book? It almost makes you wish for a George W. presidency. With him, at least, you could be absolutely sure he wouldn't read the books he blurbs.

BILLY CARTER, WE HARDLY KNEW YE?: The lounge at the Little Rock Holiday Inn must have been booked. How else to explain Roger Clinton's recent gig in North Korea? On December 5, the president's singing half-brother took the stage in a Pyongyang concert hall to perform in something the North Korean government billed as the "Year 2000 Peace and Friendship Concert." Besides treating 2,000 seemingly befuddled North Koreans to a few R&B tunes, Clinton also took a stab at international diplomacy. "I would

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

like to thank the following people," Clinton said from the stage. "General Kim Jong Il, President Kim Dong Jun, and my brother, President Bill Clinton. Without their courage, without their cooperation, without their leadership, this would have never happened." After the concert, according to the government-controlled Korean Central News Agency, Clinton "met and had a talk" with Kim Yong-Nam, the president of the presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly and Kim Jong Il's number two. And the message Clinton hopes people took away from his trip? "It's going to take guts from everybody involved with wanting this peace process to continue," he told CNN. We await word of the next stop on Roger's give-peace-and-bad-music-a-chance world tour.

FOR OUR READERS IN BROOKLYN:

"SWISS BANKS LIED: STUDY SAYS UP TO $1.3B HOLOCAUST MONEY HIDDEN"

"Swiss bankers bled dry the accounts of thousands of Holocaust victims and lied to survivors and heirs trying to claim assets worth hundreds of millions of dollars, according to a report to be released today."

—New York *Daily News*, December 6, page 2

FOR OUR READERS IN ZURICH:

"SWISS BANKS CLEARED OF LOOTING"

"Swiss banks have been cleared of systematically looting the accounts of victims of Nazi persecution during and after the second world war."

—*Financial Times*, same day, page 6

INCONSISTENT AT ANY SPEED:

"MINISTERS RACE TO FINISH GLOBAL TRADE DEAL"

—by Donna Smith, Yahoo! News, December 3

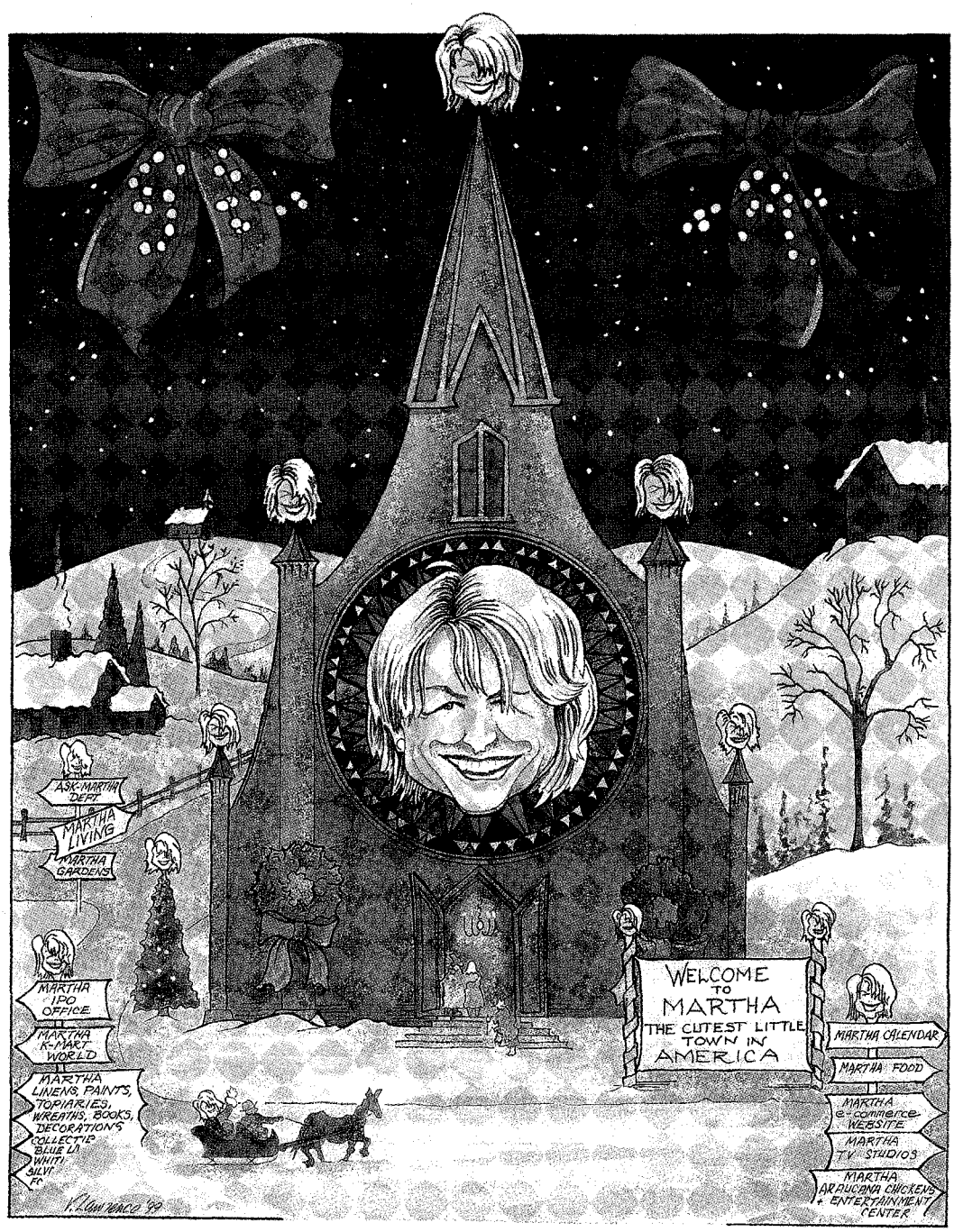
"MINISTERS INCH TOWARD GLOBAL TRADE DEAL"

—same author, same website, same day

(Thanks to Bernhardt Saini-Eidukat of Fargo, North Dakota.)

DETAILS, DETAILS: In his review of Susan Faludi's *Stiffed* ("The Male Eunuch," November 15), James Wolcott misstates her relationship to *Details* magazine during the period after the ousting of Joe Dolce from its editorship. While Faludi did contribute to the magazine's October 1997 issue, she did not join the masthead as a contributing editor. We regret the error. ■

VINT'S WEEK


ASK-MARTHA DEPT
MARTHA LIVING
MARTHA GARDENS
MARTHA IPO OFFICE
MARTHA K-MART WORLD
MARTHA LINENS, PAINTS, TOPIARIES, WREATHS, BOOKS, DECORATIONS COLLECTIVE BLUE & WHITE SILVER
WELCOME TO MARTHA THE CUTEST LITTLE TOWN IN AMERICA
MARTHA CALENDAR
MARTHA FOOD
MARTHA e-commerce WEBSITE
MARTHA T.V. STUDIOS
MARTHA ARAUCANA CHICKENS + ENTERTAINMENT CENTER

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

How Yeltsin came back.

Bad News

By Masha Gessen

"I would like to bring the following to your attention. Luzhkov's looks are very reminiscent of Mussolini's. His methods ... resemble those used by Italian fascists." So begins a recent memo sent to Sergei Dorenko, anchorman of Russia's top-rated Sunday-evening TV newsmagazine. Dorenko's program airs on Russian Public Television, or ORT—owned nominally by the Russian government but widely believed to be run by Boris Berezovsky, a business tycoon with close ties to the Kremlin. The memo was written by a member of Berezovsky's staff, and the man it refers to is Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov, one of Boris Yeltsin's chief rivals.

While Dorenko has yet to make the Mussolini comparison on air, the comments he *has* made in recent weeks are just as inflammatory. That pro-government media would demagogically attack the Kremlin's rivals is hardly a surprise. What is a surprise is that the attacks are working. The Yeltsin camp, written off a few months ago as politically comatose, has sprung back to life in time for the December 19 parliamentary elections. One reason, of course, is Russia's immensely barbaric, immensely popular war in Chechnya—and the sycophantic coverage of it by almost all Russian media. But another is the unprecedented mudslinging unleashed by Berezovsky's ORT. Yeltsin's administration may not have reformed Russia's economy or fostered a democracy, but there's one activity for which it has always shown tremendous aptitude: sandbagging its opponents.

Three months ago, the clear campaign favorite was the Fatherland–All Russia coalition, led by Luzhkov and former Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov. The elections, some analysts predicted, would make Primakov speaker of parliament and position Luzhkov as the front-runner in next summer's presidential elections. But now Fatherland–All Russia has sunk to third place. The Communists, who currently make up the largest block in parliament, lead. And Yedinstvo (Unity), a pro-Kremlin bloc that was virtually unknown last summer, has taken second place, with between 14 and 18 percent of the vote. All of a sudden it looks as if Yeltsin will be able to handpick his successor after all.

The media is much of the reason why. ORT's Dorenko, who has the looks of an aged porn star, has turned his show into a weekly extravaganza of pro-government sleaze. Among his memorable selections has been the rebroadcast of a sex scene involving two prostitutes and a man alleged to be federal prosecutor Yuri Skuratov. Skuratov, who has initiated corruption probes against Berezovsky, is an enemy of the Kremlin in general and of the tycoon in particular.

But Dorenko's most frequent target is Luzhkov. The mayor, claims Dorenko, is a murderer. Dorenko holds Luzhkov responsible for the 1996 killing of Paul Tatum, an American shareholder in one of Moscow's best hotels, the Radisson-Slavyanskaya. His only evidence: With Tatum out of the picture, the mayor (who had been struggling with Tatum for control of the hotel) succeeded in installing his own management.

Berezovsky's people have also been publicly implying a link between Luzhkov and the series of explosions that shook Moscow in September. The logic goes something like this: Since Luzhkov installed Umar Dzhabrailov, an ethnic Chechen, as general manager of the Radisson-Slavyanskaya, he must be connected with the Chechen mafia. The explosions precipitated a meeting between Dzhabrailov and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin to discuss "the Chechen problem." The meeting gave Luzhkov an in with Putin. Ergo, Luzhkov wanted the bombs.

This is lame even for Russia, the land of far-fetched conspiracy theories. Nonetheless, Luzhkov makes an easy target. Along with his reputation for making Moscow into Russia's most—in fact, its only—prosperous city, Luzhkov is known for strong-arm tactics reminiscent if not of Mussolini then perhaps of the Godfather. He routinely uses SWAT teams to scare undesirables out of the city, levies arbitrary fees on businesses, and is dismissive of rulings by federal courts.

Of course Berezovsky is no angel either. For months he's been under investigation for alleged misappropriation of funds belonging to Aeroflot, the Russian airline, in which he owns shares. Russian prosecutors hint that the tycoon is connected to Kremlin bribe-taking and that the reason Berezovsky is himself running for the Duma is that a victory would guarantee him immunity from prosecution.

Luzhkov is fighting back through his own media empire, which consists of several newspapers and a TV network. One of his shows last Sunday linked Berezovsky to kidnappings in Chechnya and then showed a hostage being beheaded. In addition, Luzhkov has accused the Kremlin of a plan to bribe Fatherland–All Russia politicians out of the campaign.

But, in this season's smear contest, Luzhkov has been out-glitzed and out-chutzpahed, and that's why he's dropping in the polls. Even his website (*www.mos.ru/majorlujkov*) is dull and difficult to locate—his official website, that is. Another one, presumably designed by his enemies, is snazzy and easily found. There, at *www.lujkov.ru*, the visitor will learn that, during the 1980s, when Luzhkov headed an engineering design bureau, coworkers "called him 'Duce' behind his back—not just because of a certain physical resemblance to Mussolini but because of his leadership style." Dorenko, incidentally, appears to have rejected the Duce comparison. Did it offend his journalistic ethics and sense of fair play? No—he just decided to go with a computer-generated image that underscored Luzhkov's resemblance to Monica Lewinsky instead. ■

Masha Gessen is currently on leave from her position as chief correspondent of *Itogi*, the Russian partner to *Newsweek*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

How much is that uranium in the window?

Power Failure

By Sarah Wildman

Hokey though it may be, the new James Bond movie rests on a scary premise: terrorists steal enough bomb-grade material from poorly guarded arsenals in the former Soviet Union to destroy a city or, at least, to hold it for ransom. In fact, the premise is frightening enough to have shaped American foreign policy. In 1993, the United States agreed to buy much of the uranium in Russia's loose nukes and resell it to commercial nuclear power plants. Observers hailed the deal as a historic and farsighted solution to the post-cold-war era's ultimate nightmare scenario.

Too bad it may be coming apart at the seams. The U.S. government agency designated to purchase the uranium from Russia, the United States Enrichment Corporation (USEC), has been privatized. That means it has to turn a profit, and it suspects the deal with Russia is getting in the way. USEC recently threatened to bail out on the agreement unless the government forked over the $100 million the company claims the deal is costing it. In the end, USEC didn't get the money and backed down. But the corporation is still looking for a way to avoid buying all of Russia's uranium—a fact that hardly augurs well for one of our most important national security agreements.

USEC was created in 1992 to run the United States' only two uranium-enrichment plants, located in Paducah, Kentucky, and Portsmouth, Ohio. Up until then, the Department of Energy had run the plants. But, swept along by the anti-big-government mania of the late '80s, the Bush administration decided it would be a good idea to privatize the industry. As a first step, the administration consolidated management of the plants under USEC—which was initially an entity within the Department of Energy—with the understanding that, within a few years, the agency would be privatized.

At the same time USEC was being created, the United States was negotiating with Russia about ways to safeguard the former Soviet Union's nuclear arsenal. Thomas Neff, a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, came up with a solution: the Russians could take the high-enriched uranium (HEU) from their dismantled bombs, "blend it down" into the low-enriched uranium (LEU) used to fuel nuclear reactors, and then sell it to America. The U.S. government, which was already processing uranium into LEU at the Paducah and Portsmouth plants and selling it to commercial nuclear reactors, would simply sell the Russian LEU instead—so the plan would pay for itself. The strategy was hailed as brilliant.

Then, in 1993, USEC signed a 20-year contract with its Russian analogue. USEC agreed to purchase 500 metric tons of Russian uranium and sell the energy to U.S. utility companies.

There was only one catch. USEC was, by the terms of the legislation that created it, slated to become a private company. Indeed, at the same time that it was signing agreements with the Russians about purchasing uranium, USEC was gearing up for a transfer to new, private owners through an initial public offering of stock. As a publicly held corporation, USEC's top priority—indeed, its legal duty to its shareholders—would be to maximize profit. And therein lies the problem. For, while the deal with Russia is probably not a money-loser, it is probably not the most profitable way for USEC to obtain nuclear fuel to sell to customers, either. Right now, for instance, USEC's CEO, William Timbers, complains, "USEC must pay $88 to $91 per unit for Russian material, while the market price for sales is only in the low $80 range." (Critics like Neff point out that USEC's older, long-term contracts still provide the company with a healthy profit—though not as great a profit as its executives might like.)

It didn't take a nuclear physicist to figure out that USEC had a built-in conflict of interest. And, in the early summer of 1998, as USEC's privatization drew near, a chorus of critics—including Neff, New Mexico Senator Pete Domenici, and World Bank chief economist Joseph Stiglitz—warned the Clinton administration against going ahead with it. Yet, astonishingly, Clinton's national security team—the very people who should have been most concerned—ignored the warnings and gave USEC's privatization the green light.

Events since then have vindicated the Cassandras. USEC's handling of the Russian deal has been problematic at best and obstructionist at worst. Most recently, in October 1999, USEC failed to provide the Russians with enough shipping containers to send their LEU. Then USEC informed the Clinton administration and Congress that, unless the government gave it the $100 million per year USEC believes the Russian deal is costing the company, it might rescind its role as executive agent.

Energy Secretary Bill Richardson questioned USEC's numbers, and National Security Adviser Sandy Berger offered the corporation $40 million. On December 1, USEC's board relented and agreed to stay in the deal. But, while USEC repeatedly stresses its commitment to keeping America safe, the company also notes that the LEU deal, as currently structured, still doesn't make business sense. "To meet the expectation of our shareholders," Timbers recently said, "the relationship between our cost structure and the market price of our products must come into better alignment."

As a result, says Richardson, "[w]e will have to remain vigilant to manage the tensions between national security and USEC's business interests.... I'd be willing to consider giving them some financial assistance, but not on the terms that they have asked before."

In fact, the real fault doesn't really lie with USEC; it lies with those who privatized it. The corporation is simply doing what any wise company would: try to boost its bottom line. The Clintonites should have realized that that bottom line would one day threaten one of the few genuine national security achievements of their administration. ■

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Where the GOP is finding its candidates.

Bottom of the Barrel

By Jim VandeHei

With his gray ponytail and waxed walrus mustache, Jeff "Skunk" Baxter is a rock-and-roll legend. He helped form the famed band Steely Dan and rocked with the Doobie Brothers on his way to 18 gold records. He has won two Grammy Awards and jammed with legendary rockers Elton John and Ringo Starr. He doesn't sound like a Republican. He certainly doesn't sound like a Republican member of Congress.

But, for the congressional GOP, these are desperate times. And desperate times call for, well, desperation candidates. So Virginia Representative Thomas Davis, the man responsible for drudging up enough money and enough candidates to salvage the GOP's tenuous five-seat House majority, has set his sights on Baxter. Not only is Davis begging him to challenge Representative Brad Sherman, a Democrat from California, he's also pleading with the Doobie Brothers guitarist to jam on the GOP's tune of lower taxes and more defense spending during an upcoming national tour of competitive congressional districts. "I don't know if he will run, but we will use him around the country," says Davis, a self-proclaimed expert on classic rock. "I'm bringing him into my district to do a little jamming."

Baxter isn't the only celebrity Davis has invited onto the Republican stage. Indeed, Davis, the chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee, has become the Tina Brown of politics: a world-class celebrity wrangler. Besides trying to roll a Doobie Brother into his fold, Davis hopes to ride a surfing champion to victory in Hawaii and help an actor on "Walker, Texas Ranger" play a politician in real life. He's also courting a 25-year-old political sensation, a talk-show host, a former TV news anchor, and a former World Wrestling Federation champion who once thumped Minnesota Governor Jesse "the Body" Ventura in the ring.

Davis wouldn't be doing all this, of course, if he weren't worried—petrified, actually—not only about the GOP losing the House but about the party's awful public image. "The same-old, same-old won't work anymore," says Davis, himself an atypically moderate, pro-gun-control Republican. "We don't need a new Republican message, we need different messengers." And that means out with middle-aged white businessmen and lawyers. "I have a unique thinking of how the new political universe works," Davis adds. "The old model of Republicans as cultural stuffed white shirts does not fit the demographic profile anymore." So Davis is searching for more women, more minorities, and more nontraditional candidates—even if they don't look or talk like your run-of-the-mill Republican.

Baxter, Davis says, is the perfect example. He's popular and well-spoken, and he has a political pedigree. A defense maven, Baxter has written for *Jane's Intelligence Review* and routinely crusades for a national missile defense system. He chairs a ballistic missile defense advisory group for Representative Curt Weldon of Florida and recently accompanied Representative Dana Rohrabacher of California on a fact-finding mission to the Panama Canal. "Celebrity status gives you recognition," says Davis, "but, when you get going, you need to prove you're good, too."

Fred Hemmings, a worldwide surfing champion and noted author on his sport, fits Davis's new model as well. He's a celebrity in Hawaii and, as a former state representative, has some real political experience. But, unfortunately for Davis, Hemmings, like Baxter, has thus far balked at his overtures. Hemmings knows he would face a popular and well-financed incumbent in Representative Neil Abercrombie, so all of Davis's money and promises may not be enough to pull him away from his waves.

Baxter and Hemmings are among Davis's more presentable recruits. Compare them to Bob Backlund. Two decades ago, when professional wrestlers at least pretended what they were doing was serious, Backlund was the quintessential blue-collar grappler. He ruled the World Wrestling Federation for a half-dozen years with a quiet, workmanlike attitude and his patented Atomic Drop, a paralyzing move in which Backlund would hoist his opponents from behind and smash them onto his knee and bulging thigh.

Now, with a push from Davis, Backlund wants to body-slam Representative John Larson, a first-term Democrat from Connecticut. At 50, Backlund's only political experience was a stint as physical-fitness spokesman for Connecticut Governor John Rowland. He says he considered a run for president in 1995 but instead opted for what he called a "ten-year plan" to gradually enter the national political arena. When Ventura, a man Backlund had victimized in the ring many years earlier, won the Minnesota governorship, Backlund sped up his timetable. "When Jesse won, it opened the door for me more quickly," says Backlund. He slapped together a campaign, spun a website (Backlund2000.com), and set his sights on Larson. He now offers donors signed memorabilia in exchange for their contributions.

Republican strategists privately dismiss Backlund as hokey and unelectable, but that didn't stop House Speaker Dennis Hastert, Majority Leader Dick Armey, and Davis from welcoming him to Washington with a small reception at the speaker's private office last spring. Backlund says he visited Washington to see "where he would sit next year." When asked about his political platform, though, he has little more to say than "I am going to bring common sense to the world."

Noble Willingham—you may know him as C.D. Parker, the bartender on "Walker, Texas Ranger"—is another celebrity with scant political experience whom Davis has recruited.

Jim VandeHei is a senior writer at *Roll Call*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

After decades of appearing in TV series and movies like *City Slickers* (both I and II), *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective*, and *La Bamba*, Willingham wants to knock off Democratic Representative Max Sandlin in Texas's first district. He says he would remove the Social Security trust fund from the general budget and implement a 17 percent, across-the-board tax rate, though he admits he has little practical experience dealing with such issues. "I have never even run for the county line," he says. "I have never done anything like this."

Like Backlund, Willingham was also inspired by a celebrity-turned-politician—the late Sonny Bono. He met Bono at the crooner's Palm Springs spaghetti house a few years ago and came away awed. "If there is such a thing as reincarnation, I want to come back as a short, wonderful Italian fellow, because he was a wonderful guy," he gushes. Willingham has plenty more friends in Hollywood, but he's reluctant to turn to his movie star pals for help. A fund-raiser hosted by "Walker, Texas Ranger" star Chuck Norris, however, isn't out of the question.

And those are just some of the (relatively) high-wattage celebrities Davis is going after. He's also nabbing candidates from the lower rungs of the celebrity food chain: Mike Pence, a local talk-show host, is running for an open seat in Indiana; Adam Putnam, a 25-year-old state representative, is running for one in Florida; and former local TV news anchorman Rich Rodriguez is challenging Democratic Representative Calvin Dooley in California.

While the celebrity candidates will make November more entertaining than usual, don't expect to see guitars, surfboards, or movie scripts in the House chamber anytime soon. "Having these unique candidates is great for p.r. purposes," snipes Erik Smith, spokesman for Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Chairman Patrick Kennedy, "but the bottom line is these candidates cannot win." Probably not. Then again, with Tom DeLay and Dick Armey dominating the public's perception of House Republicans, could anybody? ■

Bush fakes left, goes right.

Don't Worry, Cut Taxes

By JONATHAN CHAIT

WHEN GEORGE W. BUSH'S campaign leaked his economic plan to the press last week, the lucky recipients were forced to accept a special condition: any reporter who wanted to see it had to agree not to share the details with other campaigns or, more importantly, outside analysts. "This is between you, me, and your typewriter," a Bush aide told one reporter.

JONATHAN CHAIT is a fellow at the New America Foundation.

The result of this clever leak strategy was an initial wave of reviews that dovetailed with Bush's efforts to cast himself as compassionate. The plan, according to *The Washington Post*, would "focus its deepest reductions on the working poor and middle class" and "mark a clear departure from more traditional conservative GOP tax policy." Even the most skeptical story, courtesy of *The Wall Street Journal*, reported that Bush was "seeking to steer more benefits to working-poor taxpayers."

In truth, Bush's tax cut would do nothing of the sort. More than three-fifths of the cut would accrue to the upper ten percent of the income spectrum, with barely more than one-tenth for the lowest 60 percent. Bush's proposal, in this respect, resembles the tax cut passed by Congress last summer.

This unflattering little detail did eventually come to light—once reporters were able to show the plan to economists—but it was reported in small follow-up stories that ran only after the favorable impression had hardened. Moreover, the Bush campaign's masterful sales job has shoved aside other questions about the plan. Take, for instance, how the campaign accounts for revenue losses. Bush promised that his tax cut would be paid for entirely out of budget surpluses—and that it would not use any of the surplus that derives from Social Security. But Bush assumes that future Congresses will adhere to spending caps that, while still on the books, would require a 20 percent cut in domestic spending and, as a result, have been all but abandoned by even the staunchest conservatives.

That is a common fiction that candidates employ by assuming that the economy (and, hence, tax revenues) will grow considerably faster than the budget scorekeeping agencies predict. By presupposing a rosier scenario than everybody else, Bush is giving himself more money to dole out in tax cuts than any other candidate. In other words, Bush's fiscal style is to assume a bright future, commit every cent to tax cuts, and hope that we don't plunge into the red.

If this sounds familiar, it should; it was the fiscal policy of Ronald Reagan. This is still more evidence of the ingenious marketing of Bush's tax cut—Bush has defined himself to the broader public as a dissident from the conservative wing of his own party while still hewing firmly to the supply-side orthodoxy of the Republican right. Consider the following juxtaposition of events. As the Bush staff leaked the tax plan to the mainstream press, the candidate himself invited four staunchly conservative members of *The Wall Street Journal*'s editorial page to the governor's mansion for quesadillas and a briefing on the tax cut. And so, on the same day that the *Post*'s front page stated that Bush's plan "would mark a clear departure from more traditional conservative GOP tax policy," a *Journal* editorial reassured the faithful that Bush's tax cut "moves in the Reagan direction."

Bush, of course, has no intention of campaigning openly as a supply-sider. In fact, he relegated the only macroeconomic argument for his tax cut to the tail end of his speech, and he framed it in classic Keynesian terms: tax cuts, he claimed, "provide insurance against economic recession." But this is nonsensical. If you advocate tax cuts during a recession in order to get out of the recession (as Keynesians do), and if you advocate tax cuts during an economic boom in order to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

prevent a recession, then what you really mean is that you advocate tax cuts all the time. So, while Bush's rationale may seem to resemble mainstream economics, it is really a disguised argument for supply-side economics—the defining characteristic of which is the belief in tax cuts as the proper response to any conceivable set of conditions.

FINDING JUSTIFICATION FOR that belief is another matter. Supply-side economics holds that current tax rates massively discourage work and investment. That's a hard case to make in today's economy.

The desperation of the supply-siders is most apparent in the columns of the *Journal*'s editorial page, which harbors the most fervent apostles of the Laffer curve. This essential tenet of supply-side theory holds that tax hikes cannot raise government revenue because tax increases will slow down the economy, leaving the government larger chunks of a smaller pie. The *Journal* has frequently illustrated the point with a chart purporting to show that federal tax revenues have never risen above 20 percent of GDP and, therefore, never will. According to the *Journal*'s logic, the upper-bracket rate hikes of 1990 and 1993 should have so devastated the economy that by now people would be selling off their tooth fillings and clubbing rats for food.

It hasn't quite worked out that way, of course. So the *Journal* has taken to arguing for rolling back the Clinton tax hike—not on the traditional grounds that it failed to raise revenue but because it raised *too much* revenue, thereby fueling big government. It has a new chart showing how tax revenues as a percentage of the economy have grown in recent years. "The bad news," argued a recent editorial, is that, in the absence of tax cuts, federal revenues will "continue to rise as prosperity pushes more and more Americans into higher tax brackets." Such a scenario—a rising tide resulting in bulging government coffers—is precisely the utopia that the right once promised would arise from massive tax cuts. Now it is a nightmarish vision from which only tax cuts can save us.

Having lost the mantle of economic growth, tax cutters have fallen back on non-economic arguments. Over the summer, congressional Republicans sought to put forth the case that the government's black ink represents an "overcharge" that "belongs to the taxpayers." Running a budget surplus, by this formulation, is inherently immoral. Bush has taken this even further, linking his tax cuts to "prosperity with a purpose" and "a country rich not only in goods but in goodness."

Behind these airy generalities lies a very specific intent. Bush's constant invocations of "Latino communities" and "waitresses, store clerks, and janitors" are meant to imply that the status quo is immoral because of its impact on the middle and lower classes. But the substantive thrust of his proposal acts upon an altogether different moral indictment: a belief that taxing the rich, whatever its practical effects on the economy, is simply wrong. It's no accident that Bush's tax cut would exactly repeal the upper-bracket tax hike enacted by President Clinton. Repealing that increase has been a goal of supply-siders for years, but Bush makes no mention of the fact that his plan would do so. That's no accident, either. ■

Campaign Journal

Misspent Youths

By DANA MILBANK

Manchester, New Hampshire, December 2

I HAVE COME to Manchester today to participate in one of political journalism's great hoaxes. Hundreds of reporters have convinced our editors (and will soon convince our readers/viewers) that we are in New Hampshire to "watch" tonight's GOP presidential debate. But, in fact, we will do nothing more than hang out, eat sandwiches and brownies, and watch television. We will do all this in a windowless shed which we call the pressroom but which our hosts, at Manchester's WMUR-TV, call the mosh pit. The candidates are in another room, and we see them on-screen, just as we would have done at home, only not as comfortably. Worse, I have forgotten to reserve a seat in the mosh pit, so I am relegated to the back, a couple of rows behind Japan's *Asahi Shimbun*.

Fortunately, there is relief from the suffocating pressroom. This relief comes in the form of one Jeff Costa, who, for reasons unclear, decided to come to the debate tonight wearing a red cape and red lobster-claw mittens. Turns out Costa is campaigning for president as "Lobsterman" on the Crustacean Liberation Party ticket. Lobsterman has come with a banner that reads LOBSTERMAN FOR PRESIDENT 2000, but he apparently forgot to run his spell-checker—the banner states that he is a "Crustacian."

Inexplicably, Costa was not allowed to participate in the presidential debate, so he has established himself in a parking lot across the street, where he projects a Lobsterman campaign video onto a brick warehouse wall. "These people think they have denied me the opportunity to speak to you!" Lobsterman bellows. "Why? Because these people are called the mainstream. The Lobsterman does not come from the mainstream. The Lobsterman comes from the ocean, the home of the crustaceans.... Puritans—remember them? Were they mainstream? Uh-uh. I don't think so." Costa, who is a professional wrestler when he's not campaigning, goes on to discuss his platform. "We don't have a problem with gun control," he declares. "We have a problem with maniac control." Apparently so.

There's also a bit of a problem with crowd control. Several hundred rough-looking youths have come to the debate on this sub-freezing night just so they can stand outside the TV studio in their orange T-shirts, waving STEVE FORBES signs and harassing the other candidates and their supporters. They are mostly 16-year-olds: too young to vote for Forbes in the February 1 primary but not too young to shout for him. I ask one of them why he's backing Forbes. "I want to keep more of my tax dollars," the boy replies.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

You pay taxes?

(Pause.) "I used to. I got fired."

Forbes's young warriors, a fixture at the debates, are everything their candidate isn't: fierce, energetic, and cool. They have spiked hair and pierced bodies. They march in formation. They beat drums. They wield wooden sticks with FORBES signs. They taunt would-be presidents. They are scary. "We've thought about calling them F-Troop and Orange Crush," says Graham Shafer, Forbes's New Hampshire director. But, after watching a group of them march into the pressroom and disrupt candidate interviews at a recent debate, a bystander gave them another name: *die Jungen*. Indeed, there is something very "Germany 1938" about them.

Ask Dave Lenhart. A mild-mannered county commissioner from Maryland here to cheer for George W. Bush, Lenhart finds himself surrounded by pro-Forbes youths on the sidewalk outside the debate. "You have to move," an orange-clad tough orders. When Lenhart responds with something legalistic about a "public easement," the thug returns with more toughs and megaphones. "We own this sidewalk!" they chant at Lenhart, who takes a good look at them and retreats from his public easement.

The debates so far have not been debates at all but "forums" in which candidates trade 60-second excerpts from their stump speeches. I find that I am no longer paying attention to the substance (such as it is). All I can see are the candidates' quirks. Forbes, for instance, has developed a new speech impediment. For a long time, he would say "also" before almost every sentence, to make his speeches seem to cohere. Sometimes, he would substitute the word "too" for "also." But now he has acquired the bad habit of saying "also" and "too" together. He did it twice in a press conference the day before the debate, then twice more in a speech. Tonight, asked about poor airline service, he scores a redundancy hat trick, beginning one sentence, "And also too...."

Phoenix, Arizona, December 6

IT MAY BE utterly pointless to watch presidential debates from the pressroom, but here I am on a five-hour flight to Phoenix for the next one. Tonight, though, I have a plan: I leave the pressroom, wangle a ticket to the debate from one of the campaigns, put away my press badge, and walk right into the debate as a private citizen, a guest of the Arizona Republican Party. Suddenly, my whole perspective changes. I can see the gilded theater, the shades of gray in the candidates' suits. I can see Judy Woodruff's legs behind the podium (note to Al Hunt: not that I'm looking). Most importantly, I can see the candidates' body language when they're off-camera and hear the murmurs and titters in the crowd. And, from this vantage point, things do not look good for George W.

Even before tonight, Bush's paint-by-numbers campaign has at times verged on the farcical. For the last several months, Bush has begun almost every speech with a story about a discussion he's supposedly just had with his wife, Laura, before leaving Austin. As he tells it, his wife advised him, "When you get up to [Washington, New York, New Hampshire ... fill in the blank], don't go showing off and pretending you're witty and debonair." Since he flunked the world-leader pop quiz, Bush has been telling crowds that Laura further counseled: "And don't go naming all the world leaders, either." It is hard to imagine Laura Bush, a sensible woman, making the exact same joke to her husband before every single trip.

Tonight, the stump-speech excerpts the governor uses to answer questions don't seem to work. He starts by declaring, "If the poorest of the poor remain in trapped schools"—an inadvertent reversal of the script, which calls for the phrase "remain trapped in schools." As candidates take potshots at Bush—for using public school money for vouchers (John McCain), for "looking for somebody else to put words in your mouth" (Alan Keyes)—Bush shifts his weight, taps his foot, slouches left, looks bored, moves his hands, tilts his head, drinks from a water bottle, tilts his head again, grins weakly, shifts his feet again, and jiggles his leg. He's clearly not enjoying himself. Asked to expand on his reading of a Dean Acheson biography, which he mentioned at the previous debate, Bush doesn't even pretend to try, launching instead into a stump speech snippet about how "we must promote the peace." McCain then slyly relates a story about Acheson telling President Truman that North Korea had invaded South Korea.

When Gary Bauer presses Bush on China, the frontrunner, briefly thrown off his script, stammers and makes mention of the need to export "Arizona farm products." (Cactus?) Forbes surprises Bush by asking him about the oil supply—a trick question, since it's one a Texas governor should be able to answer but not one that he would have been prepped for. Bush says twice in his answer that natural gas is "immune from OPEC." McCain then shrewdly mentions how the Chechnya situation affects the oil supply.

Other candidates use the "debate" to ask questions of their rivals, advance their own causes, or put others on the defensive, but Bush stumbles. He asks Orrin Hatch to praise his "compassionate conservatism." But Hatch turns on Bush. "[F]rankly, I really believe that you need more experience before you become president of the United States," he says. "You'll make a heck of a president after eight years" as vice president to President Hatch. Amazingly, the GOP audience loves it, with many actually laughing at their frontrunner. It only gets worse in Bush's closing speech. He wheels out his favorite lines: "no child is left behind" and "match our conservative minds with our compassionate hearts." Titters and laughter begin in the back of the room and ripple forward as the clichés are recognized.

Bush's squirming is amusing but, in truth, fairly predictable and not headline-making. The candidates' debate performances have by now become standard: Bush scripted, Hatch boastful of obscure legislative accomplishments, McCain witty, Bauer zealous, and Keyes mad. And Forbes? Five more "also too"s tonight. Indeed, the candidates are so true to form that they are no longer interesting. One yearns for a candidate who will break the mold and defy the conventional wisdom. In search of such a candidate, I leave the campaign spinmeisters in the pressroom in Phoenix and hop a plane to Los Angeles, where Donald Trump's California tour is already in progress. ■

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Did the Texas penal system kill James Byrd?

Prisoner's Dilemma

By MICHAEL BERRYHILL

SOMETIMES A CRIME is so despicable that it defines, at least for a time, the place where it occurs. Think of Oklahoma City, or Littleton, Colorado—or Jasper, an East Texas logging town where, in June of last year, a black man named James Byrd Jr. was chained by his ankles to the bumper of a pickup truck and dragged three miles down country roads. His knees and his genitalia were ground off. When he hit a culvert, his head and one shoulder were severed from his body. His corpse was deposited near the gate of a black cemetery where former slaves were buried and where some of the bodies were memorialized with spirit markers, in keeping with ancient African tradition.

The murder thrust Jasper into the national glare, and at first its moral seemed clear. The cotton and timber country of East Texas, the media noted, had always been known for its racism. During Jim Crow, most of the state's lynchings took place there. One of the last bastions of the Ku Klux Klan had its headquarters in Vidor, 70 miles south of Jasper. It wasn't hard to see what the Jasper killing meant. It meant that, in the poor, hick towns of the Deep South, white people hadn't really changed.

Then, over time, the story shifted. Two days after the murder, Jasper County Sheriff Billy Rowles picked up three local white men: John William King, Lawrence Russell Brewer, and Shawn Berry. A judge refused to move the first case, King's, from Jasper, saying the town could deal with its own. By February of this year, an almost entirely white jury of townspeople had convicted King of murder and sentenced him to death, making him only the second white man in Texas history to be given the death penalty for the murder of an African American. After the verdict was announced, Rowles, a slow-talking white man in his fifties, embraced Byrd's son before the cameras. A TV reporter who covered King's trial told me he felt something "almost spiritual" upon hearing that King had been condemned to death. Jasper was not the Old South after all.

Two more trials and two more convictions followed, with Brewer also getting the death penalty and Berry receiving a life sentence just a few weeks ago. Now Jasper is receding from sight. The town, too, had been on trial, and, to the surprise of many, it has been found innocent. By moving so swiftly and decisively to find the killers and bring them to justice, Jasper proved it was not responsible for King and Brewer and Berry, after all. With the morality play resolved, the national media has gone home, leaving just one question, a question no one seemed to want to ask: If Jasper did not create the killers of James Byrd, what did?

ALTHOUGH BILL KING, Russell Brewer, and Shawn Berry were all convicted of James Byrd's murder, it eventually became apparent that Berry's role had been markedly different from King's or Brewer's. Even the prosecution admitted that Berry was not a racist. Indeed, at his trial, several black coworkers testified that Berry had had good relations with them. Berry was, however, a high school friend of King's. That's why King and Brewer, an old friend of King's from prison, were in Berry's truck the night they picked up Byrd, who had been hitchhiking. Berry said King and Brewer ordered him to stop the truck on a remote dirt road, whereupon they pulled Byrd out of the cab and began beating him. Paralyzed with fear, Berry said, he wet his pants and did nothing to stop them.

In contrast to Berry, both King and Brewer were avowed white supremacists, their bodies covered with racist tattoos. They didn't get the tattoos in Jasper; they got them in prison. While Berry, as a teenager, had been arrested along with King for stealing cigarettes from a warehouse, he had served time only in a boot camp for young offenders. After that, Berry kept his nose clean and stayed out of jail. King, on the other hand, violated his probation and was soon sent to prison, where he met Brewer. It was that experience that made King and Brewer the men they are today. Three working-class white men grew up in small East Texas towns at about the same time and under similar conditions. Two went into Texas prisons, and one did not. And the two who did came out monsters.

King and Brewer called themselves "woods." In the racial war that goes on in Texas prisons, where inmates of color outnumber whites by about three to one, "wood" is short for

MICHAEL BERRYHILL is a writer living in Houston. The reporting of this story was underwritten by the Fund for Investigative Journalism, Inc.

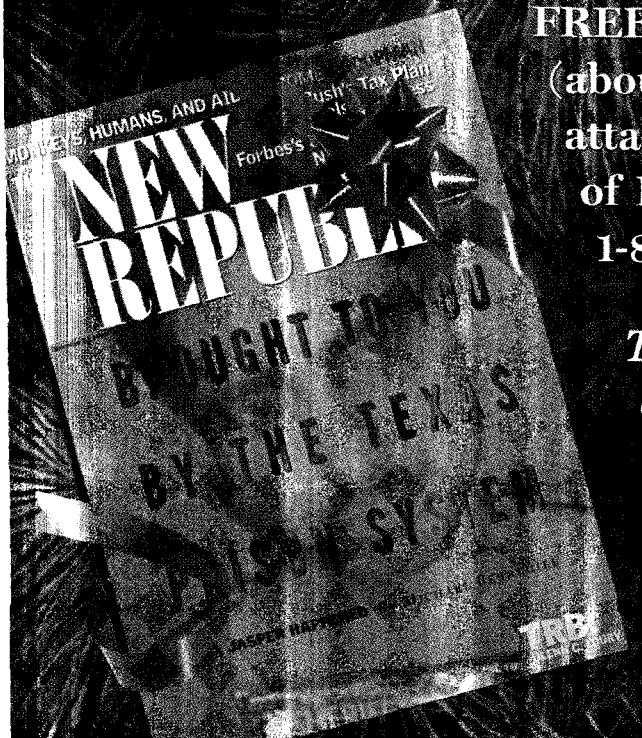
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE NEW REPUBLIC

Give the Gift of Politics, Culture, and the Arts this Holiday Season.

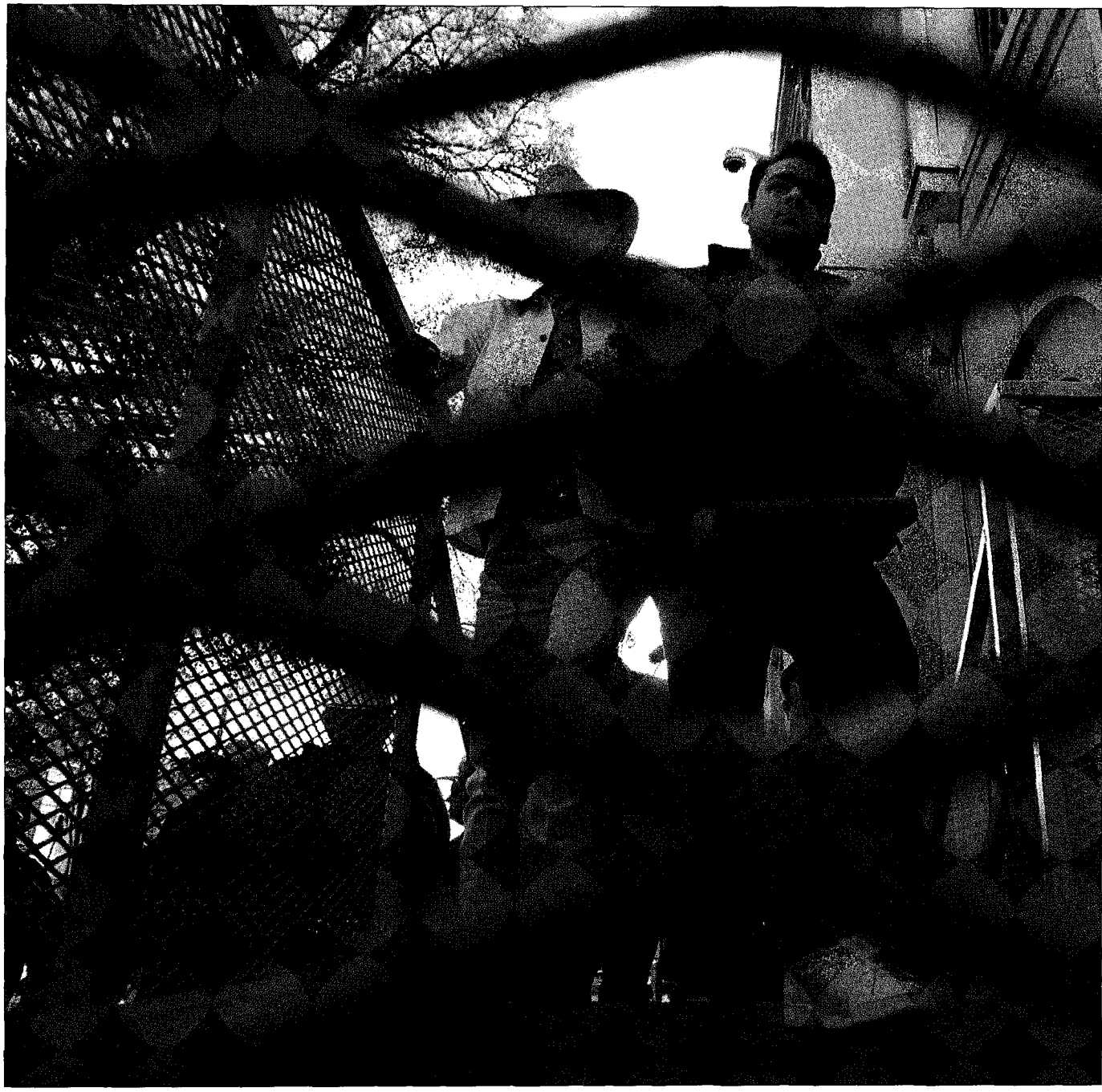
The New Republic readers appreciate the penetrating analysis and thoughtful commentary that the magazine offers each week. In today's world of spin and sound bites, this kind of balanced, thorough reporting is expected by all discriminating thinkers. It's what makes *The New Republic* America's preeminent journal of opinion.

Share *The New Republic*'s insight with friends and family members like yourself. Act now for special gift giving savings—one gift is only $59.94, then a second gift subscription is yours ABSOLUTELY FREE! All additional gifts are only $29.97 (about 62¢ an issue). Simply fill out the attached coupon to share your unique gift of Politics, Culture, and the Arts. Or call 1-800-827-1289 for faster service.



The New Republic is provocative and exciting, skeptical and quotable. It always fits. It's never returned. It lasts a whole year. It's guaranteed to please. And when you order several, you'll save 50% off the regular price.

LICENSED TO UVZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



ADRES LATIF

John William King

"peckerwood." Black Southerners started using the word peckerwood to refer to poor whites some time at the end of the last century. Blacks, writes Clarence Major in his dictionary of African American slang, "saw the common blackbird as a symbol of themselves." The redheaded woodpeckers that roamed the Southern forests came to represent whites. And, just as blacks have so often appropriated the epithets of whites, whites in Texas prisons have adopted peckerwood and made it their own.

In Texas prisons, a wood is a white man who will "stay down," or fight for himself and his friends. If he's a good fighter, he is known as a "hard wood." If he caves in, goes fetal, calls for the guards, weeps, pleads, or fails to fight, he's a "ho," a whore, suitable for extortion and rape. Ho's are the lowest men in the prison hierarchy, despised by inmates and guards alike. When inmates fail to defend themselves against sexual assault, the common advice of prison authorities is to "act like a man."

King and Brewer met at the Beto unit of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice in 1995. Beto is considered by inmates to be a "gladiator" unit: 3,000 young men in their twenties, many of them toughened by living on the streets and as members of racial gangs.

Prison victims come in all colors and sizes, of course, but young whites, prison officials and defense lawyers say, have an especially hard time. A middle-class white boy sent to prison for trying to stretch his allowance by dealing drugs or breaking into houses may have to fight day after day. He will be attacked not only because he inspires resentment but because such attacks can be lucrative. More than half of Texas

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

inmates are broke. Although inmates are required to work in the fields, factories, and offices of Texas prisons, Texas pays them nothing for their labor. So inmates find other ways to make money. One is to sell contraband—tobacco, drugs, pornography—that is often smuggled in by the poorly paid guards. Another way is through extortion. Still another is by turning a prisoner into a ho and selling his sexual services to other inmates.

Trying to account for what happened to their client in prison, King's lawyers put a Beto inmate named John Mosley on the stand. A towering man, six-foot-three and 280 pounds, Mosley gave King many of his racist tattoos. In response to questions from King's lawyers, Mosley told the jury about a common practice in Texas prisons, known as "checking," by which inmates vet new arrivals. Asked what checking is, Mosley explained matter-of-factly, "It means you fight, fuck, or 'up sixties,'" referring to the $60-a-month maximum that an inmate could at that time spend at the commissary. If an inmate gives in, he becomes a ho and can be "rented" to other prisoners, a profitable enterprise.

King never testified, and prison records indicate next to nothing about whether or how King was checked, except that he was in a scuffle on his first day, in June 1995. Whatever happened, though, it must have scared him—for he soon joined his cellmate Brewer's small white gang, the Confederate Knights of America, for protection.

Brewer, though a few years older than King, was a man much like him. A small-town burglar who sometimes stole from his own relatives, Brewer was in and out of prison for seven years. Like King, Brewer was relatively small in size and, except for his tattoos, was hardly intimidating.

During his trial, Brewer described in weeping, halting testimony how he had come to join the Confederate Knights. Soon after he arrived at Beto, in early 1994, Brewer was checked by two Hispanic gang members. The guards, he said, had ordered all the inmates in his cellblock to sit down on benches in the dayroom or be punished. It was almost as if the guards wanted to see what confrontation would transpire. Blacks held one bench, Hispanics held another, and whites occupied the third—but the whites wouldn't let Brewer sit with them. For two days, he said, he leaned against the wall. Then two Hispanic gang members asked him whether he would fight or "ride"—that is, give them money or sexual favors. Brewer said he told them he would not ride and if they were going to beat him up they should go ahead and get it over with.

As far as checking goes, Brewer had it easy—the two Hispanics never made good on their threat. Still, his fellow white inmates were sufficiently impressed with his refusal to back down that they allowed him to sit on their bench. And Brewer was soon invited to join the Confederate Knights.

The Confederate Knights was a fledgling group, in contrast to better-established white gangs at Beto such as the Aryan Circle and the Aryan Brotherhood. The Beto chapter called itself the Texas Rebel Soldiers; its members swore oaths of loyalty to the Ku Klux Klan. Prison authorities and King's lawyers say no more than a dozen inmates were members. With typical exaggeration, King bragged in a letter to a girlfriend that "not just anyone is prospected and asked to be a part of these brotherhoods. One must be one down motherfuckin' peckerwood. Any white boy who comes in and stays down for himself is a wood or peckerwood. That's when you receive your bolts [tattooed SS lighting bolts] and nickname."

In addition to the bolts, Brewer and King each acquired a multitude of racist tattoos—created by other inmates using a needle hooked to a small electrical motor pilfered from a typewriter or a light fixture. King was particularly proud of a menacing version of Woody Woodpecker dressed in a Klan robe and perched on a limb from which dangled the tiny figure of a hanged black man. He wrote to a girlfriend that he was friends with "one of the coldest skin artist[s] on this unit." "Hopefully by the time I come home," he wrote, "I'll have 65 percent of my body covered. My head, arms, neck, back, side, chest, stomach and dick. I know no one's gonna want to fuck with a . . . peckerwood covered in skin art."

Being a member of the Confederate Knights meant sharing the secret password, attending meetings, acting as a lookout, hiding documents, earning points on a merit chart, and swearing to "bear true allegiance to the sacred principles of Aryan Racial Supremacy and political freedom in Government upon which our forefathers founded a new nation upon this continent." Most importantly, it gave men like King someone to call "bro" (another word, like ho and peckerwood, that prison whites took from the people they said they hated).

Misfits in the small towns where they grew up, in prison King and Brewer found a group that accepted them. Brewer cut short the visits of his Hispanic wife and son for fear of antagonizing his fellow gang members. His brothers in prison were more important, he testified. Bound by rituals, tattoos, and written oaths sealed with bloody thumbprints, they were initiates to a secret order. They had a common enemy: the "mud race."

By becoming woods, Brewer's and King's lawyers argued, the two men didn't just protect themselves from the theft of their commissary money. They protected themselves from rape. In describing his checking experience, Brewer stated that "the odds [of being raped] were against me looking like I did with no tattoos." King, however, refused to help his lawyers present fear of rape as a mitigating circumstance for his racist views. C. Haden Cribbs, one of King's lawyers, says that when he asked King if he had been sexually assaulted, King got "positively indignant" and wouldn't talk about the subject. Ultimately, the jury didn't buy the rationale, and neither, for the most part, did the press. At one of the defense team's daily news conferences, one reporter chided King's other lawyer, Brack Jones, with the comment that "[the prison] system isn't on trial."

In fact, the Texas prison system was on trial early last spring, only in a federal court and in a different city—Austin. And the evidence that surfaced in that case strongly supports the argument of Brewer's and King's lawyers.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The federal case, known simply as *Ruiz*, for an inmate who filed part of the original class-action suit, deals with a wide range of problems within the Texas prison system. *Ruiz* has been going on for more than 25 years. And in its history lies the story of how the Texas Department of Corrections created the conditions both for today's widespread sexual violence and for the system of racially segregated gangs by which inmates protect themselves from it.

Until Texas prisons were desegregated by court order in 1979, white prisoners were given certain privileges. In contrast to black inmates, who had to run to the fields in which they labored, and to Hispanics, who rode there on trailers with benches that had no backrests, the whites were taken in trailers outfitted with benches and wooden backboards for them to lean against. Even after desegregation, when whites suddenly found themselves in cellblocks where they were outnumbered by minorities, they retained a major advantage, thanks to the wardens' practice of using them as "building tenders." While uniformed officers ran the hallways, shops, offices, and farms, the mostly white building tenders, armed with baseball bats and knives and equipped with the keys to the doors, ran the cellblocks. Guards did not enter without an escort from these men. And the other inmates were completely at their mercy. Even though the use of building tenders was outlawed in 1974, the practice continued long after that. By doing the work of guards, the building tenders saved the Texas prison system money. If some inmates were abused in the process, well, that was the cost of keeping order.

THEN, IN THE early '80s, after the *Ruiz* case brought the system's many abuses to light, the federal judge for the case, William Wayne Justice, ordered Texas to end the use of building tenders once and for all, among other reforms. Justice warned the state that unless it moved quickly to hire guards to replace the building tenders, prison security would be threatened. Texas failed to do so quickly enough. The resulting power vacuum was rapidly filled by racially segregated inmate gangs, each vying for control of the cellblocks.

Since initially allowing the gangs to take control, the state has failed to wrest it from them. In response to another ruling by Justice about prison overcrowding, Texas has embarked on a massive building spree during the past several years. Meanwhile, thanks to increased federal funding for the war on drugs, the state's prison population has exploded—from 60,000 inmates in 1992 to almost 150,000 today. Because of the drug laws' disproportionate application to minorities, most of these inmates are black or Hispanic. The result is white inmates thrown into cellblocks in which they are outnumbered by minorities three to one and for which the state is unable to hire and train guards quickly enough to keep order.

Short on manpower, the guards in Texas prisons have, in effect, accepted the gangs as the new building tenders. Instead of protecting inmates from violence, they endorse the gangs' ethos, encouraging prisoners who are threatened to fight for themselves and looking down on those who do not.

Witness, for instance, the exchange between Donna Brorby, the court-appointed attorney for the inmates in *Ruiz*, and a prison captain who had ignored an inmate's request for protection because the prisoner had not fought his attackers:

> Q: Now, if an inmate attempts to defend himself [from a sexual assault] and he is fighting an inmate who is maybe stronger and a better fighter than he is, the consequence of that is that he'll get a beating; is that right?
>
> A: Probably so.
>
> Q: And then what's going to happen after the beating?
>
> A: Then that's something that helps me make my decision whether or not his allegations are actually legitimate or not.
>
> Q: Do you think that maybe the inmate just has a choice between having a beating and being raped versus just being—you know, he could skip the beating and go right to the rape?
>
> A: That's an individual choice that he can make.
>
> Q: But you disapprove of that choice; is that right?
>
> A: Yes ma'am, I would.
>
> Q: Because that would be consenting to sexual contact?
>
> A: It could be misconstrued by the inmates that are attempting to rape him. It could be misconstrued by them that he is consenting.

Not surprisingly, then, violence and rape are common occurrences in Texas prisons. Brorby certainly had no shortage of rape victims from Beto in her files. One inmate had been raped while in Beto's Mentally Retarded Offender Program and was then raped again at a psychiatric unit. Another Beto inmate testified he was raped by three prisoners he was paying for protection. Another, from a different unit, was so tired of being abused that he asked prison doctors if they could sew his anus shut. Rape and fear of rape were so prevalent, Brorby argued, that they dominated everyday life in the Texas prison system.

Yet, as Justice noted this past March, the Texas Department of Corrections keeps almost no record of sexual assaults. This, concluded Justice, is further evidence of the state's indifference to the fates of inmates. "It is difficult to believe," Justice wrote in his opinion, "that in a population of more than 140,000, there were only six confirmed cases of sexual assault in 1998. That only six inmates were eligible for punishment for sexual assault further defies credulity. It is also disturbing to learn that there are apparently no reliable system-wide statistics concerning requests for protection by inmates." As a result of this and other evidence, Justice has ruled that the Texas prison system should remain under the court's authority.

Meanwhile, membership in prison gangs continues to rise. According to Sam Buentello, chief of the Texas prison system's gang-intelligence unit, about 5,000 inmates are known to belong to officially recognized gangs, with another 10,000 suspected of gang affiliations. About 700 belong to the white supremacist groups Aryan Brotherhood or Aryan Circle. About 900 belong to either the Crips or the Bloods, the black gangs. The greatest number belong to Hispanic gangs, such as the Mexican Mafia and the Texas Syndicate. These recognized gangs elect officers, take votes, conduct courts, and execute punishments in a legalistic manner, with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

communications coded or sometimes hidden in legal papers that prison authorities are forbidden by law to intercept and read.

Compared to the major gangs, King and Brewer's Confederate Knights of America was small potatoes. It didn't have a written constitution, and the Texas Department of Criminal Justice termed it not a gang but a clique. Yet it clearly made an impact on both King and Brewer.

After he joined, King's letters from prison to his girlfriends became increasingly racist—and were often tinged with sexual resentment of minorities. Woods were always the victims of prison authority. Blacks and Hispanics got away with everything. "Truthfully sweetheart," he wrote, "sometimes I just feel like 'fuck comeing home.' I'm better off here. I have it made in all actuality, why give it up for a world full of nothing? What do I have to look forward too returning to Jasper? A town full of race traitoring nigger loveing whores? Bitches that are so fuckin stupid and blind to the pride of their race and heritiage that they should be hung on the limb adjacent their nigger loveing man."

WHEN THEY WERE finally released from prison in 1997, King and Brewer brought their racism home with them. When King first returned to Jasper, his old pal Shawn Berry said, he spouted racist talk and displayed his tattoos. But, according to Berry, King toned it down when he didn't get any response from Berry and his friends and started wearing long-sleeved shirts to cover up the tattoos. Then, three weeks before Byrd's murder, Brewer—who had been thrown out of the house he'd been sharing with a girlfriend in a small town north of Jasper—moved in with King.

According to Berry, when Brewer showed up, the two former cellmates returned to their prison slang and took up their old ways. When they needed a chain saw and a weed trimmer for a job clearing brush, they stole them. They took 50 bags of potato chips from a motel lobby. When they wanted beer, they broke into a warehouse and took a dozen cases. A few nights before killing Byrd, they cleaned out a restaurant's supply of frozen steaks.

They also revived their commitment to the Confederate Knights. King even wanted to start a chapter in Jasper. In his apartment, police found membership forms and a written constitution for the gang.

Berry contends he never believed King or Brewer would act on their racism, but he admits the two were outspoken about it. Indeed, on the afternoon before Byrd's murder, King had been angry about encountering blacks at two different parties at friends' homes.

Brewer and King also seemed obsessed with asserting their masculinity and repudiating homosexuality. The constitution of the Confederate Knights expressly forbids homosexuality. In prison, King had gotten a tattoo of the Disney character Tinkerbell on his penis, and he showed it off to several of Berry's friends one night at the movie theater that Berry managed. Brewer also said that on the night of the murder he and King got out of the truck and were relieving themselves in the clearing when King tried to "burn" him—prison slang, Brewer politely explained to the jury, "for trying to get me to look at his thing." Such sexual horseplay between Brewer and King was common. The two sometimes tweaked each other's breasts and teased each other about "getting it" from a black cellmate. The two men's racism, in short, seems intimately tied to their sexual fears.

It is telling, then, that Byrd's torture and killing included an element of sexual humiliation. Before chaining Byrd to the bumper, King and Brewer pulled down his pants. And, after the dragging was over and the trio was driving back to Jasper, Berry says King told him, "that's what they did to niggers when they messed with white women in the old days." But who was the white woman who felt sexually threatened by Byrd? It may have been King.

OF COURSE, NOTHING King and Brewer experienced in prison justifies what they did. And, although their tattoos made them look tough, they were cowards. The man they killed was helpless and drunk. It is also true that many white inmates who join racist gangs in prison manage to leave them once they get out.

But the fact remains that the kind of racially motivated sexual torture and murder that King and Brewer committed is common enough in Texas prisons that, had they carried out a similar crime while still in jail, it would scarcely have been noticed. By committing it on the outside, King and Brewer have opened a window onto what happens on a frequent basis in Texas's vast prison system. And, as an estimated 300,000 men like King and Brewer are released from the Texas prison system over the next ten years, it is entirely possible—indeed, likely—that we will see more and more racially motivated, prison-style crimes outside prison walls. Just last month, police say, a white teenager who had been in several juvenile facilities in Indiana shot and killed a black teenager in order to gain status within a white-supremacist prison gang.

King, for his part, appears to have gotten the verdict he wanted. In a prison "kite," or note, that King sent to Brewer before their trials, King seems to have hoped to die a martyr to the cause of white supremacy. Indignant that Brewer testified that they were *both* at the murder scene, King has thrown Brewer out of the Confederate Knights of America, one of King's lawyers said. And, on the afternoon King was sentenced to death, the press asked him whether he had anything to say to Byrd's family. He replied, with a smirk, "They can suck my dick."

Last spring, while a hundred or so reporters and photographers waited for the jury to announce King's sentence, I drove to a state park on the edge of town to listen to the local radio station and breathe some fresh air. After a two-and-a-half-hour deliberation, the jury returned the death penalty. I looked up and a solitary pileated woodpecker swooped unhurriedly through the pines, its red topknot distinct and pointed. When the radio reporter interviewed Jasper citizens on the sidewalk, several of them said that, for the murderers of James Byrd, death was an easy way out. Life in prison, they reasoned, would have been worse. ■

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

This Side of Paradise

A NEW HIGH IN irony—sheer gall, really—arrives in **The End of the Affair** (Columbia). In this adaptation of Graham Greene's novel, the protagonist, himself a novelist, takes his lover to see a film made from one of his books. As they watch the screen, he keeps whispering to her, "Not what I wrote." The film that we are watching, in which he says this line, is not what Greene wrote, either.

In his deep and compelling novel, Greene uses a conventional triangle situation—single man, married woman, her husband—as an armature for an unconventional drama of religious faith, its testing, its agony, its balm, its awe. The story begins in London in 1946 when Maurice Bendrix, the novelist, accidentally meets Henry Miles, the husband of his former mistress Sarah. The account goes back a couple of years to the beginning of the affair during the war; then, in the "present," Bendrix re-meets Sarah, whom he has not seen since the affair ended two years ago, and their emotion is recollected in something less than tranquility. She is now gravely ill (we learn later). Her progress toward death and through stages of faith—recovered, questioned, born again bravely almost as a penance—are disclosed to Bendrix through a secret reading of her diary.

The "present-day" drama includes a rationalist preacher, whom Sarah visits secretly as a sort of test, and a private detective who leads Bendrix to this preacher. (Bendrix himself has engaged the detective. Henry has confessed to Bendrix his unrest about his wife's odd absences; Bendrix thinks he wants to assuage Henry's unrest, but surely Bendrix himself is curious about the secret visits she is making to someone.) It is this detective who purloins Sarah's diary for Bendrix.

Right in the fabric of this understated story of a spiritual pilgrimage, Greene places two miracles, also understated. First, the rationalist preacher has a large, livid birthmark on one cheek; this birthmark disappears after Sarah's death, a dying that is wrapped in religious agon. The medical explanations about the mark's disappearance don't convince, and the rationalist, frightened, abandons rationalism. The second miracle is revealed after Sarah's death. Bendrix meets her mother, Mrs. Bertram, for the first time. She is a Catholic, her husband was not; and she confides to Bendrix that when Sarah was a child, she had her daughter baptized secretly. Mrs. Bertram says that Sarah was a real Catholic "only she didn't know it." The clear implication is that, aware of it or not, Sarah was marked for God and that what happened to her in her last years was her unwitting Catholicism taking over.

And how does the screenplay by Neil Jordan handle these miracles? The rationalist preacher is turned into a Catholic priest whom Sarah visits secretly. The birthmark on his cheek is transferred to the young son of the private detective. (The boy follows his pa around, learning the trade.) Though the boy is of course not involved in Sarah's religious searchings—which Greene's rationalist preacher certainly was—she once happens to kiss his cheek; this "explains" why the mark left his face. Thus Jordan deletes the battle between rationalism and divinity, whose victory Greene assigns to God, and thus the defeat of rationalism is changed to a blessing conferred unknowingly by a woman on her way to paradise.

As for the second miracle—the secret baptism that grew within Sarah into a transfiguring blaze—Jordan omits it completely.

Aside from ravaging the spiritual elements in the novel, aside from other sorts of subtleties that are trashed, Jordan has vulgarized the book's very structure. Toward the end of Sarah's life, Greene keeps Bendrix suspended in a medium of complex emotions, on the periphery of the Miles marriage. One morning when his telephone rings and he thinks that it is Sarah, it is in fact her husband. Bendrix hears something strange in Henry's voice and thinks that Sarah may have told him about their affair. But Henry has called to tell him that Sarah is dead. "How conventionally we behave at such moments," thinks Bendrix, who, after the (unvoiced) shock, simply says that he is sorry. Henry doesn't "fancy being alone," and invites Bendrix over for a drink. In the course of time, Henry invites Bendrix to move from his apartment to some rooms in Henry's house. Bendrix accepts. Husband and lover—Henry now knows of the affair—are united by Sarah's death after she has gone.

This structure, which might even be called another miracle, is not good enough for Jordan. He has Bendrix move into the Miles house before Sarah dies, where the lover helps the husband to tend her sickbed. Greene's delicate suggestion that her spiritual presence lingers on after her death and changes the lives of these two men is cartooned into commonplace sickbed scenes. This change of course enlarges the role of Sarah for its actress and provides her with moments out of *Camille*. Especially since her illness is pulmonary.

Jordan's screenplay is not an adaptation, it is a devastation. It's so drastic that we are left puzzled as to why Jordan, who also directed, wanted to adapt the novel at all if he was going to violate it this way. Greene's book is a work of art about religion, set amid involvements of the most banal kind. If Jordan felt obliged to squeeze and to distort—almost to apologize—for the religious theme, why bother with the book? I never saw the 1955 film of *The End of the Affair*, adapted by Leonore Coffee, directed by Edward Dmytryk. I remember avoiding it because, though Deborah Kerr played Sarah, Bendrix was played by that epicene nonentity Van Johnson. I regretted my decision some thirty years later when Greene said that, of all films made from his religious novels, this was "the least unsatisfactory." Even this restrained praise suggests that, if there was shrinkage of spiritual elements in the Coffee adaptation, at least it didn't result in the dreariness of the Jordan film. The place that Greene gave those spiritual elements is not filled otherwise in Jordan's film: it is simply left empty. Hence the dreariness.

That dreariness is certainly not due to the Bendrix here, Ralph Fiennes. Apparently Fiennes is on his way to supplant Jeremy Irons as the refined, taciturn English sex idol of the day; but he is a skilled, chromatic actor, sensitive to half-tones in feeling and speech. Stephen Rea, an old associate of Jordan's, plays Henry and is miscast. He does not convince as a high-level government official who is dignified yet almost pathetic because of his dulled emotional being.

The real disappointment is Julianne Moore as Sarah. She looks right and sounds right: her accent is as good here as it was in *An Ideal Husband*. But she is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

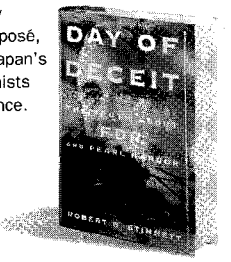
Books.
[AT BARNES & NOBLE]

A Look Back

DAY OF DECEIT
by Robert B. Stinnett

World War II veteran and journalist Robert Stinnett reveals long-hidden evidence that shatters every supposed Pearl Harbor truism. In this searing exposé, Stinnett details how FDR deliberately provoked Japan's devastating attack in order to galvanize isolationists to support the greatest war of the U.S.'s existence. (Free Press)

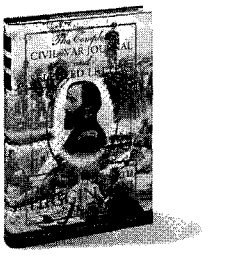
Pub. Price: $26.00
Discount **20%**
Our Price: $20.80



THE COMPLETE CIVIL WAR JOURNAL AND SELECTED LETTERS OF THOMAS WENTWORTH HIGGINSON
edited by Christopher Looby

Brahmin-born minister Thomas Wentworth Higginson was at the forefront of nineteenth-century antislavery, labor and feminist causes. Now, University of Pennsylvania professor Christopher Looby has collected the diary and letters of the crusading colonel who led the first black Union army regiment. (The University of Chicago Press)

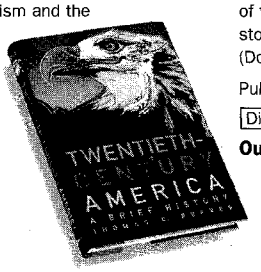
Pub. Price: $35.00
Discount **20%**
Our Price: $28.00



TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICA
by Thomas C. Reeves

From the author of the bestselling *A Question of Character: A Life of John F. Kennedy* comes a succinct, comprehensive and objective overview of twentieth-century American political and social history—from Progressivism and the New Deal to the close of the century. (Oxford University Press)

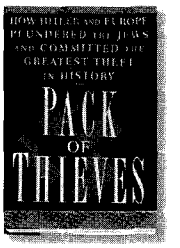
Pub. Price: $30.00
Discount **20%**
Our Price: $24.00



PACK OF THIEVES
by Richard Z. Chesnoff

Prize-winning journalist Richard Chesnoff, among the first to report that Swiss banks were still hoarding Holocaust victims' assets, chronicles the systematic looting of Jews by the Nazis and most of the European nations in this heartbreaking story of human greed. (Doubleday)

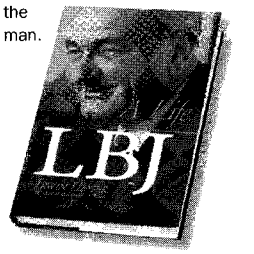
Pub. Price: $27.50
Discount **20%**
Our Price: $22.00



LBJ: A LIFE
by Irwin Unger & Debi Unger

Lyndon Johnson is remembered as one of the toughest yet most charismatic presidents, his entire career marked by the tensions of a tumultuous era in American history. Now, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Irwin Unger and Debi Unger reveal the politics and the personality behind the man. (Wiley)

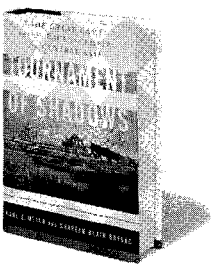
Pub. Price: $30.00
Discount **20%**
Our Price: $24.00



TOURNAMENT OF SHADOWS
by Karl E. Meyer & Shareen Blair Brysac

Former *New York Times* editorial board member Meyer and Emmy Award-winning *CBS News* producer Brysac brilliantly illuminate the political and economic implications of the Great Game, the 170-year clandestine struggle between Russia and Britain for mastery of Central Asia. (Counterpoint)

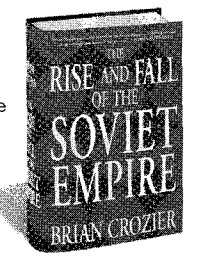
Pub. Price: $35.00
Discount **20%**
Our Price: $28.00



THE RISE AND FALL OF THE SOVIET EMPIRE
by Brian Crozier

Called by Henry Kissinger "the definitive history of the Soviet Empire," this powerful chronicle moves fluidly from the birth of the USSR to its demise—from the Bolshevik fervor of 1917 through the close of the Cold War—without missing a turbulent step. (Prima)

Pub. Price: $35.00
Discount **20%**
Our Price: $28.00



BARNES&NOBLE

shop online at bn.com *or visit our stores*

© 1999 Barnes & Noble, Inc.

Prices effective at store locations through 1/10/00

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

icy. Presumably Moore wanted Sarah's torments and yearnings to be private, as they mostly are in the novel; but she presents very little of the woman who contains these private storms. We get overt revelations from time to time, like the praying that she does after Bendrix is knocked flat by a V-2 bomb in 1944. (His quick recovery is still another miracle that she has wrought—again unwittingly.) But Moore leaves such moments uninflected. "Batter my heart, three person'd God," cried John Donne. Moore conveys small sense of that plea.

Jordan, as director, gives us plenty of other batterings. He loads on fairly explicit sex scenes that tilt the film in quite the wrong direction. Greene, except for one mention of Sarah's experience of orgasm with Bendrix—none with her husband—keeps the emphasis on the specificity of these individuals, not the universals of copulation. Sarah's rites of religious passage, Bendrix's love-hate relationship with God as his rival for Sarah's love, are smothered in the way of all this flesh.

A pleasant final word. The story dwells in two time planes, the time of the affair and two years later, which is "now." The editor, Tony Lawson, deals with this problem so deftly that it isn't a problem, it's a benefit. Lawson slips in and out of the two planes so lightly that past and present seem almost a metaphysical continuum. ■

Robert Brustein on Theater

Musicals and Musicales

Until recent times, many Hollywood movies were based on Broadway plays and musicals. Today, the arrow has been reversed. Exemplifying the commercial theater's diminishing capacity for originality, a lot of the "new" works on Broadway are remakes of old movies. This is particularly true of the Broadway musical where, faced with such shows as *The Lion King*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, *Jekyll and Hyde*, *Les Misérables*, *Saturday Night Fever*, and *Ragtime*, you may not know whether you are looking at a stage or at a screen, whether you are consulting the *Times*'s ABC Directory or examining the marquee of your local cineplex.

Most of these musicals, of course, began life as literary works. Books have always been prize booty for the entertainment industry, just as novelists—F. Scott Fitzgerald, William Faulkner, Aldous Huxley, Raymond Chandler, Dashiel Hammett, and others—have sometimes been its well-paid hostages. The difference today is that Broadway is less likely to make novels into plays than to musicalize the movies that were originally fashioned from the books.

James Joyce never had the dubious fortune to be approached by Hollywood or Broadway, but *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* were both adapted for the stage, and "The Dead," the lovely culminating story of *Dubliners*, was made some years ago into a film. The last movie made by John Huston, it was sensitively directed and superbly acted. But to conceive of a New York musical fashioned out of this delicate story is rather like imagining a hippopotamus sitting on a daisy.

And yet, **The Dead** is now a successful off-Broadway show poised to move to Broadway. And since this would seem to consign it to the same parasitical status as the musicals named above, I went to see it at Playwrights Horizons with considerable trepidation—only to be very happily surprised. Richard Nelson's adaptation of Joyce's story is both faithful and imaginative, and supports very comfortably the addition of Shaun Davey's songs, many of them with lyrics by eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century Irish poets, as well as by Joyce himself.

Indeed, with hindsight, a musical adaptation of "The Dead" almost begins to seem inevitable. In the story, the annual Christmas dance at the Dublin home of Kate and Julia Morkan is awash with music. Songs and verses are the ladders of the evening, with the guests getting up in turn to give speeches, recite snatches of poetry, play the piano, or sing traditional Irish tunes. In short, the action of "The Dead" may not be right for a conventional musical, but it is perfectly appropriate for an old-fashioned "musicale"—a program of music performed at a social gathering—which is the form the Morkan party often takes.

It is the "musicale" that is recreated on the intimate stage of Playwrights Horizons. The various characters—under the direction of the author and Jack Hofsiss—all rise to sing their Gaelic songs, facing away from the audience and upstage toward the assembled guests. Holding their hands behind their backs like amateur performers, the actors unravel the story before, during, and after the tender melodies.

There was only one formal misstep in the evening, but it was almost fatal. In a number called "Wake the Dead," the drunken Freddy Malins and the company were encouraged to break into a conventional showstopping choral number, complete with choreographed high kicks and rollicking Tin Pan Alley harmonies. This was tantamount to dumping a keg of Miller High Life on the delicate table linen. At this moment, I feared, the piece was out the window, the decorum of the convivial atmosphere broken by irrepressible showbiz spirits. But it soon recovered, during a lovely scene in the bedroom of Aunt Julia, interpolated by the author, in which the ill and aging woman contemplates the ghost of her own childhood. And it recovered even more during that final scene in the hotel room of Gabriel Conroy and his wife Gretta. There, you will remember, Conroy has the gut-wrenching realization that his wife had once been in love with a young boy who died after standing in the rain outside her window, and that a song sung during the party had recalled the lad's memory to the weeping woman.

Those familiar with "The Dead" know how it seems to wander aimlessly through clusters of local color and holiday cheer before climaxing in that heartbreaking perception by Gabriel Conroy. Conroy is Joyce's portrait of the artist as a young book reviewer (he is a columnist for *The Daily Express*), who shares the author's intellectual distaste for his own country. The rather pompous speech that he gives during dinner is mostly about the past and sad memories and "absent faces." He is aware neither of the irony of his rhetoric nor of how soon his images will be confirmed by reality. In the hotel bedroom, contemplating his sleeping wife, Conroy reflects on the poverty of his own feelings when compared with those between Gretta and the boy who died for love of her, meanwhile watching the snow fall gently upon "all the living and the dead."

Christopher Walken as Conroy speaks and sings these lines, as he does the whole of his part, with virtually no attempt at a Dublin accent and not much in the way

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of voice support, yet with a casual grace that is powerful in its simplicity. Walken inhabits rather than performs his roles, embodying the characters rather than enacting them. He has no peer in the way he can engage with an audience, turning his hooded eyes and sudden smile into an intimate relationship with each and every spectator. Playing his wife Gretta, Blair Brown weaves a skein of buoyant middle-aged beauty out of the threads of memory, regret, and nostalgia. And Sally Ann Howes's ailing Aunt Julia, Marni Nixon's lively Aunt Kate, and Stephen Spinella's rowdy Freddy—indeed the entire gifted cast—almost always manage to evoke this magnificent story without recourse to crude theatrics. That one production number is an unfortunate exception. If "The Dead" can transfer to a Broadway house without the need of showstoppers, Playwrights Horizons may not have a mega-hit on its hands, but it will have produced something infinitely more rare and valuable—a touching theatricalization of a great piece of literature.

After *Shakespeare in Love*, I was prepared to change my opinion of Tom Stoppard. Granted that this movie script was written with a collaborator, and granted that he had the luminous Gwyneth Paltrow available to animate the central female role, the movie nevertheless managed to wed this playwright's wit with an emotional depth I could never find in his plays. Perhaps he will develop these qualities more in future works. But **Indian Ink** (now playing in a highly praised production at the Studio Theatre in Washington, D.C.) is a regression to the old verbal acrobat and intellectual showoff, crammed with literary chit-chat and cultural palaver. If sojourns in India produce plays like *Indian Ink* (not to mention Terrence McNally's *A Perfect Ganesh*), then some playwrights should be forcibly restrained from traveling abroad.

Stoppard has an impeccable ear—not so much for how people speak as for how other writers write. Thus far he has given us perfect impersonations of Shaw, Wilde, and Beckett, not to mention a host of existential philosophers. (The gift for impersonation being the gift of assimilation, not least of assimilated Jews, it was no surprise when the Czech-born Stoppard, who spent his childhood at an army post in India, recently published the news that his parents were Jewish.) In *Indian Ink* he does another pretty fair impersonation, this time of E.M. Forster. He even pays tribute to that writer in his play. But what he produces is *A Passage To India* without the Marabar caves—without, that is to say, any metaphysical reverberations.

Stoppard also has a gift for imitating himself. Following the pattern of *Arcadia*, which alternates between the eighteenth century and modern times, *Indian Ink* moves between the Raj in the 1930s and India and England in the 1980s. All this time and space travel is designed to support the story of a young Bloomsbury poet named Flora Crewes, who died young. It also advances a plot about the people who, fifty years later, are trying to reconstruct her lost past from letters and diaries, namely her younger sister Eleanor Swan and the research scholar Eldon Pike. Since Flora has been familiar with the likes of H.G. Wells, Madame Blavatsky, Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein, and Alice B. Toklas (she even acted once in a play by Shaw), a lot of the play consists of literary name-dropping. What plot there is concerns her relationship with Nirad Das, an Indian painter, and how she manages to persuade him to paint her in the nude. The relationship remains unconsummated even though (or maybe because) she poses naked while reciting samples of her execrable verse ("yes, think of a woman in a house of net/ that strains the oxygen out of the air/ thickening the night to India ink"). India ink is not all the night is thickened with.

The Indian painter is an Anglophile. The English poet is an Indianophobe. Each would prefer the other to be more faithful to his or her origins. In the parallel plot, Mrs. Swan (now an old woman) and Das's son Anish, also an Indian painter, are engaged in a totally different dispute. Mrs. Swan claims that the British were responsible for all of India's civilized achievements. Anish counterclaims that India was a civilization when the Britons were painting themselves blue. The parallel plots and character contrasts clang almost louder than the dialogue.

Flora not only has the chance to discuss Indian philosophy with Das. She also gets to dance a lot with the pukka sahibs at the Jummapur Club, tolerating their narrow

A Morning in Vicenzy

In memoriam Joseph Brodsky, Krzystof Kieslowski

The sun was so fragile, so young,
that we were a little scared; a careless move
might scratch it, just a shout—if anyone
had tried—might do it harm; only the rushing swifts,
with wings hard as cast-iron,
were free to sing out loud, because they'd spent their brief,
uneasy childhoods in clay nests
alongside siblings, small, mad planets,
black as forest berries.

In a small cafe the sleepy waiter—the night's last shadows
curled beneath his eyes—searched for change
in his vast pocket, and the coffee smelled of solemn
printer's ink, of sweets, Arabia. The sky's blue
promised a long afternoon, an endless day.
I saw you as if for the first time.
And even Palladio's columns seemed
newborn, they rose from waves of dawn
like Venus, your elder companion.

To start from scratch, to count the losses, count the dead,
to start a new day without the two of you, first you
whom we buried twice and lamented twice,
you lived two times as strongly as the rest, on two continents,
in two languages, in the world and in imagination—then you,
with your chiseled face, the gaze that amplified
objects and hearts (always too small).
You are gone, and so from now we will lead a double life,
at once in shadow and in light, in bright sunshine
and the cool of stony halls, in mourning and in joy.

Adam Zagajewski

—translated by Clare Cavanagh

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nationalism with bemused patience. To top it off, she begins some kind of relationship with the Rajah of Jummapur. The two characters get to talk about Indian art and the British empire. They talk about Marxism and civil war. They talk about independence. They talk and talk and talk. And talk. For more than three hours.

Perhaps this play would not have given me such a rash if the production had been less stertorous and the accomplished actors had been less stentorian. But under Joy Zinoman's emphatic direction, every one of Stoppard's epigrams and aperçus is hammered into your head like carpet tacks. Faran Tahir as Das, and June Hansen as Mrs. Swan, manage to create some subtlety out of their parts, but the actress playing Flora Crewes could use some lessons in Bloomsbury decorum. Smirking, simpering, and shimmying through the part like a demented flapper, her voice emerging from her throat like a compact disc being played backwards at high speed, she doesn't make a very strong case for all this posthumous interest.

In an informative program note, the dramaturg Michelle Hall suggests that Eldon Pike's quest for the biographical facts of Flora Crewes was inspired by Stoppard's search for his Jewish roots and the unknown father who died in the Holocaust. (The stepfather who reared him in India was a British army officer.) If so, this is a worthy quest that could have a significant impact on his writing. It hasn't happened yet. Too much of *Indian Ink* is written with disappearing ink. ■

The End of Aetiology

By JEROME GROOPMAN

The River: A Journey to the Source of HIV and AIDS by Edward Hooper

(Little, Brown, 1070 pp., $35)

Virus by Luc Montagnier

(W.W. Norton & Company, 249 pp., $24.95)

I.

THE STORY OF the AIDS epidemic has been told many times from many vantage points—biological, clinical, sociological, psychosexual, economic, geopolitical—and in the many voices of its protagonists—clinicians, laboratory scientists, epidemiologists, people with HIV, activists, journalists, public health officials. The multiplicity of perspectives and personae notwithstanding, each rendering of the disaster discloses in its way the magnitude of the suffering that has been caused by this pandemic, and the continued threat that it poses.

AIDS was first recognized in 1981, in Los Angeles and New York. Dr. Michael Gottlieb, a clinical immunologist at UCLA, informed the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta that unusual infections, such as Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia, were occurring in a handful of previously healthy young gay men. Dr. Alvin Friedman-Kien, a dermatologist at NYU, reported to the same federal agency on the appearance of a rare cancer, called Kaposi's sarcoma, in a similar population of young male homosexuals. All these affected men had impaired immune defenses. It took some three years until the cause of their immunodeficiency was identified as HIV.

Taxonomically, HIV is a retrovirus, that is, a type of virus whose genes are composed of RNA, and then "reverse transcribed"—copied back—into a DNA form upon entering a susceptible blood cell. After this reverse transcription, the viral DNA permanently integrates itself into the DNA of the host cell, generally a T-cell or macrophage. (T-cells and macrophages are types of blood cells that are essential to immune defense.) This means that once you are infected with HIV, you are infected for life. Over time, the virus eats away at the host immune system by destroying helper T-cells and disarming tissue macrophages. Since those are the cells that protect us against fungi, TB-like bacteria, herpes viruses, and cancers such as Kaposi's sarcoma and B-cell lymphoma, their loss causes us to fall prey to these infections and these tumors.

WHAT GOTTLIEB AND Friedman-Kien observed as a medical oddity in 1981 is now the second most common cause of infectious death in the world, just behind influenza and respiratory illness. Significantly, in industrialized countries the death rate has sharply declined over the last two years, due to the introduction of anti-HIV protease inhibitors. These agents were developed in part through rational drug design, an approach that wedded high performance computing with a three-dimensional representation of the desired target. In the case of HIV, the 3-D topology of its critical protease enzyme was deciphered; and computers screened drugs in a virtual format to see which agents docked on the surface of this target enzyme and would prevent it from working. Six different anti-viral drugs were developed by this method.

Those drugs have restored countless sufferers to a better quality of life and staved off what previously was a steady decline to death. How long the protease inhibitors will work, and for how many, is an open question. As with all antimicrobials, the bug mutates and develops resistance. Moreover, the protease blockers are cumbersome to take, and in some people they have significant side effects, such as diarrhea and lipid deposition in the abdomen and neck. Emerging viral resistance and drug toxicity make the quest for new and better treatments all the more urgent; but it is unarguable that the death sentence of AIDS has been stayed for many in the West. In developing countries, however, the situation continues to be grim. In nations with yearly per capita expenditures of a few dollars for health care, the protease inhibitors are too costly to be distributed, and the death toll climbs unchallenged.

Strategies aimed at the prevention of HIV have not been as successful as those aimed at its therapy. The prospects for a vaccine are still remote, given the wide antigenic variability in strains of the virus as well as its capability of mutating quickly to escape the grip of the immune system. Educational efforts have clearly had an impact, manifest in the reduction of sexu-

JEROME GROOPMAN is the Recanati Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School. His new book, *Second Opinions: Stories of Intuition and Choice in the Changing World of Medicine*, will be published by Viking next spring.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ally transmitted diseases both in the gay and heterosexual communities. There is appropriate concern about "slippage" in adherence to safer sex practices, particularly among the young, but the message about AIDS and condoms and needles continues to be forcefully articulated from high school hygiene classes to MTV. Funding for HIV research remains a priority within the National Institute of Health. Pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies see HIV as a lucrative target, given the need for lifelong daily anti-viral therapies.

Discussion also continues over the means to best combat the disease: how to effectively educate different risk groups about the threat; how to coordinate intellectual and material resources to generate new and more potent therapies; what breakthroughs are needed to create the long-elusive vaccine; whether drug companies have a moral obligation to provide expensive therapies to indigent developing nations. AIDS activists press for better distribution of drugs and information, and question the profit margins made by the pharmaceutical companies, and hector candidates who do not support subsidies for treatments in the developing world. In general, the activists have effected significant changes within both governmental and corporate structures. People with AIDS and their advocates are integrated into the decision-making process in the White House, at the NIH and at other governmental agencies, and they are often consulted by the drug manufacturers about the distribution of products in the affected communities.

II.

It was to be expected that some would reject the mainstream view—which is to say, the scientifically warranted view—of the AIDS epidemic and the progress made to date, and produce manifestos and books of historical and biological revisionism. Peter Duesberg, a professor of biology at Berkeley, is a prime example. He is the champion of the contrarian position that HIV is really an epiphenomenon, an innocuous fellow traveler, and not a pathogen. Duesberg contends that the immune system of AIDS victims collapses because of the destructive effects of excessive sex and illicit drugs, and the toxicities of anti-HIV agents, such as AZT.

Duesberg's view is simply not supported by the facts. First, HIV acts as a pathogen in vitro, readily destroying T-cells in the test tube. Second, people who were sexually conservative and did not use illicit drugs—such as health care workers who suffered needle sticks while caring for AIDS patients—contracted HIV and developed immune deficiency. Third, there is an animal model of AIDS: monkeys carry related retroviruses known as simian immunodeficiency viruses, or SIV. Pure SIV inoculated into chaste monkeys produces AIDS-like immune collapse. And most dramatically, the therapy of people with AIDS by means of anti-HIV protease inhibitors causes a dramatic reduction in virus production and consequent restoration of immune function.

Given these forceful observations at the lab bench and the patient's bed, the Duesberg hypothesis is touted by fewer and fewer people. But there has been also another non-mainstream theory about AIDS, a theory that was aired and largely refuted, and is now resurrected in Edward Hooper's tome. Hooper re-visits the scenario that HIV entered the human population by means of contaminated lots of oral polio vaccine. This is said to have occurred during the widespread vaccination efforts in Central Africa in the late 1950s. Hooper is not a crank. He accepts HIV as the etiology of AIDS. He distances himself from the Duesberg nonsense, as well as from the fringe that in the past pursued scenarios about the origins of the virus in Caribbean pigs, secret military biological warfare, or a plot to wipe out homosexuals. Instead Hooper takes up the cause of a few journalists and medical researchers who focus on a colony of chimpanzees in the Congo in 1957-1958.

"An 800-page compendium of the crimes of Communist regimes worldwide, recorded and analyzed in ghastly detail by a team of scholars. The facts and figures, some of them well known, others newly confirmed in hitherto inaccessible archives, are irrefutable...No one will any longer be able to claim ignorance or uncertainty about the criminal nature of Communism."
—Tony Judt, NEW YORK TIMES

"When *The Black Book of Communism* appeared in Europe in 1997 detailing communism's crimes, it created a furor. Scrupulously documented and soberly written by several historians, it is a masterful work. It is, in fact, a reckoning."
—Jacob Heilbrunn, WALL STREET JOURNAL

"Not the least remarkable thing about this book is that this is the first time such a study has been made...A devastating and important book, already hailed in Europe, and the more harrowing for its sobriety."
—KIRKUS REVIEWS

new in hardcover

THE BLACK BOOK OF COMMUNISM

Crimes, Terror, Repression

STÉPHANE COURTOIS, NICOLAS WERTH, JEAN-LOUIS PANNÉ, ANDRZEJ PACZKOWSKI, KAREL BARTOSEK, AND JEAN-LOUIS MARGOLIN
FOREWORD BY MARTIN MALIA

HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS
800 448 2242 • www.hup.harvard.edu

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Now, the chimps *might* have been carrying a strain of SIV, the simian cousin of HIV. The SIV isolates known so far are not pathogenic for chimpanzees, but they *could be* pathogenic upon infection of humans. The oral polio vaccine hypothesis *posits* that kidneys were harvested from SIV-infected chimpanzees; and these kidney cells *may have been* used for cultivation of polio virus by Hilary Koprowski at the Wistar Laboratory in Philadelphia to make vaccines. The SIV-contaminated oral polio vaccine from Philadelphia *may* have been given to Africans in the Congo in the late 1950s. The chimp SIV strain then *could have* genetically evolved into what we know now as HIV. All of this is possible. None of this is proven.

THE MAINSTREAM SCENARIO subscribed to by AIDS researchers is that a chimpanzee SIV was indeed the progenitor of HIV, but that the transmission of these chimp viruses occurred via blood contamination of Africans: as uncooked meat in the diet or during butchering accidents, when chimpanzee blood may have entered open cuts. Yet Hooper refuses to endorse these quotidian routes of transmission, and becomes the prosecuting attorney for an iatrogenic, or medically caused, case.

> When I first learned of the OPV/AIDS theory in June 1992, I had been investigating theories of origin for more than two years. Suddenly, here was a more plausible explanation than any other I had come across, but I was still far from convinced. However, when further research consistently pointed to the same conclusion, I found, after several years, that I was starting to describe myself as "more than 90 percent persuaded" on the basis of the steadily accumulating stream of evidence.... But how is it that so many of those who should have been searching ... the virologists and vaccine-makers, the molecular and evolutionary biologists, even the epidemiologists — have failed to do their job?
>
> There seem to have been several factors at play. First, most of them were not on the field trip: they were busy in their labs, peering into microscopes (or preparing grant applications). Second, there have been so many crackpot hypotheses of origin, so many silly and spurious conspiracy theories, that many observers became jaded and skeptical about iatrogenic theories per se. Third, many of those who had followed the controversy at a distance had read Koprowski's reply in *Science*, or heard about the Wistar expert committee's negative report, and had assumed that the matter had been laid to rest, that another theory had crumbled when subjected to the fierce light of scientific examination.
>
> But possibly there was a fourth reaction too—one involving protection of the profession and fear of peer reaction. Because, if the OPV/AIDS theory was proved to be true, then the implications—and likely repercussions—were almost too awful to contemplate.
>
> Some, the virologists and vaccine-makers, might feel that the theory could turn people against vaccines in general. Some, like primatologists, might be concerned that it would lead to awful retribution against African primates—especially chimpanzees. And some—those in certain institutions and pharmaceutical companies, or public health departments—would simply have dreaded the glare of unwanted publicity. Beside, they may have felt, why should they be held responsible for mistakes that occurred forty years earlier?

BEFORE WE ASSESS Hooper's musings on the "awful" consequences, let us first examine the oral polio vaccine hypothesis. Hooper is 90 percent persuaded of its truth. Where is the remaining 10 percent? He doesn't exactly say, but the rest of the evidence, I suppose, is direct rather than circumstantial: the fingerprints on the smoking gun. Just as DNA fingerprinting is a powerful tool in criminal cases to nail down the perpetrator, so DNA fingerprinting is used in virology to determine the identity of pathogens. In this instance, however, the fingerprints of the chimpanzee SIV and the fingerprints of the earliest isolates of HIV do not match. They are too dissimilar to posit that SIV contaminating an oral polio vaccine moved into man and became HIV.

Or, to put it another way, SIV has an alibi. Hooper imagines it at the scene of the crime—widespread oral polio vaccine distribution—but it is too far away to be the culprit. Its exculpatory distance is measured in the rate of genetic change of these retroviruses. The first known HIV strain comes from a man in the Congo in 1959. It would take twenty to forty years, at a minimum, for the known chimpanzee SIV to evolve into the human Congo HIV in 1959, and thus acquire similar DNA fingerprints. But the oral polio vaccine was made in the United States, and then distributed in the Congo, in 1957-58. The fingerprints of the chimp SIV do not match the fingerprints of the African HIV. And there is no evidence that the chimpanzee SIV changed into HIV within the chimp, before allegedly being passed into a human. No jury would convict.

There are other problems with the prosecution's case, albeit less directly dismissed. Kidney cells themselves are not supportive of growth of either SIV or HIV. Blood cells, specifically T-lymphocytes and monocyte-macrophages, are the sites of virus replication and release; and T-lymphocytes and macrophages require complex conditions to spawn HIV and SIV. (Indeed, one of the major hurdles in the study of HIV after it was first found at the Pasteur Institute was the difficulty in producing the virus in tissue culture; only after the NIH group identified permanent T-cell lines that resisted the destructive properties of HIV could the virus be produced in significant quantities.) Thus, it is unlikely that chimpanzee kidney cell cultures, even if they were contaminated with a few blood cells, could be the source of much retrovirus.

These retroviruses, moreover, are relatively fragile, despite the devastation they cause within the host. Their exterior protein shells are easily broken, rendering the virus inactive. So the survival of a miniscule amount of chimp virus in the few T-cells or macrophages that might contaminate kidney cell cultures is difficult to envision, particularly given the shipment of the tissues from Africa to the Wistar Institute in the United States, and then back to Africa.

MUCH TO HOOPER'S credit, he repeatedly acknowledges that the evidence supporting the oral polio vaccine hypothesis is entirely circumstantial. He states that it is actually not known whether chimpanzee tissues were used at the Wistar Institute by Koprowski's team for manufacture of the Congo vaccine. Also, none of these SIV retroviruses were found in European polio vaccine lots. As for the lack of matching DNA fingerprints, given the slow rate of evolution of chimp SIV into Congolese HIV, Hooper raises the question whether there might be accelerated genetic change when a new pathogen (like SIV) first enters a naïve host (like man).

But there is no clear precedent for this, which rather enfeebles the idea. In fact, healthy researchers handling SIV-infected monkeys who became infected themselves, did not show such accelerated mutations in the simian virus. Similarly, sexual partners or transfusion recipients who contract HIV were linked to the source of their infection—the sexual contact or blood donor—by similar DNA fingerprints. The virus did not change its gene make-up so radically in a short interval. I am unaware of a deviation from this paradigm in the countless published studies of retroviral transmission.

Writing about Hooper's book in *The New York Review of Books*, Helen Epstein recently addressed the issue of how a monkey virus such as SIV could evolve

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

into HIV. She cited the work of Dr. Opendra Narayan, a researcher in the University of Kansas. "I . . . agreed with Hooper's view that AIDS just didn't look like an old African disease," Epstein observed. "It looked like HIV had crossed from primates to people quite recently.

> . . . I discovered that Narayan had actually succeeded in turning an apparently harmless monkey virus into an AIDS virus in his own laboratory.
>
> Narayan works with a genetically engineered virus called a SHIV (simian human immunodeficiency virus), which is a version of HIV that is used to infect lab monkeys. This SHIV grows in monkeys but does not cause disease in those monkeys, and it is not passed to other monkeys through sex, biting, or other natural means. However, this SHIV can be passed from one monkey to another artificially in laboratories, for example through blood transfusions or through bone marrow transplantation. If the SHIV is transmitted artificially from one monkey to another rapidly enough, through a process known as "passaging," it can turn into a virus that spreads easily and causes AIDS in monkeys.
>
> Something similar may have happened with HIV. If a hunter or monkey-meat butcher became infected with a harmless monkey virus and then shortly afterward passed it on to someone else, who then passed it on to someone else in a few weeks later, it is possible that the monkey virus might have turned into HIV.

Epstein's interpretation of Narayan's work on SHIV, to argue for a short timeframe of SIV evolution, betrays a lack of understanding of the underpinnings of the experiment. SHIV is a chimera, an artificial product of genetic engineering whereby large pieces of a clone of the human virus HIV are grafted in the laboratory into the backbone of the monkey virus SIV. SHIV does not exist in nature, in monkeys or in man. It is not "a monkey virus," but something akin to a griffin or a minotaur. Its genetic elements would not arise through the normal course of transmission from primates to man. SHIV is not a precedent for a "harmless monkey virus" turning into HIV in "a few weeks"; it is, rather, a hybrid creation that can only be spawned in a test tube. And it is a sign of Hooper's probity in his lay analysis of the scientific literature that he does not make the error that Epstein does.

And so, after 843 pages of often vivid and flowing prose about the AIDS epidemic and its social impact, and the parallel stream of circumstantial evidence, Hooper prudently makes his closing arguments not for conviction but for further research studies to settle the issue. But those studies are relatively simple: they would consist in an examination of the records of production of the accused oral polio vaccine lots to see if they were made from virus grown in chimpanzee kidneys, and in rigorous assays of any remaining stocks of vaccine, for DNA fingerprints of either chimpanzee SIV or Congo HIV. Such studies would take little time and would consume scant resources. If the Wistar group chooses, it can respond with the data to solidify their previous published rebuttals.

As to Hooper's listing of potential repercussions as "almost too awful to contemplate," he underestimates the merciless ethic of scientific inquiry. The vast majority of scientists pursue the truth regardless of where it leads and whom it offends. The falsification of data, and the suppression or neglect of experimental results, could not be sustained in the research community. A worldwide cover-up abetted by hundreds or thousands of researchers is almost impossible even to imagine, except in pulp fiction.

Indeed, the best researchers relish challenges to dogma and encourage contrarian views. They are eager to wrestle with opposing data—so long as the struggle is on a plane of rationality, and the contest is played by the rules of the scientific method: cause and effect and reproducibility of results. I am of the opinion, obviously, that the oral polio vaccine hypothesis is incorrect; but I would change my mind if I were provided with solid experimental data that verify it, and under those intellectual circumstances I would have to accept that genetic evolution of retroviruses can be radically accelerated under certain conditions. And every scientific colleague I know who is dedicated to authentic inquiry would respond in precisely the same way. This is not an idealistic picture of how science works; it is a realistic picture.

Hooper is anxious that some people would be turned against vaccines in general, but surely not a greater number of people than those who now debate the safety and the need for vaccination, particularly among children. The weight of expert opinion in public health is strongly on the side of vaccines, invoking their great value in preventing past scourges such as polio, measles, and diphtheria. If forty years ago a lot of oral polio vaccine was contaminated, then let us know it, and let us safeguard all current vaccines, and use the knowledge wisely in the development of future vaccines.

As for the rampant slaughtering of pri-

Increase your hearing range by a factor of 10x, and get top-notch FM stereo reception besides, with...

PowerVox VII™ (Hearing Mate) with included FM Stereo Radio by RodelVox™ only $49.95*

**But read this ad for an even better deal!*

The instructions of *PowerVox VII™ (Hearing Mate)* caution you to have the control on "very low" when you first try it, because this instrument is truly amazing in its sound amplification—up to 10-times the actual level. You will be able to hear a pin drop 10 feet away, television, the movies, and the theater without any trouble, and every little sound in your surroundings. A walk through the woods will let you listen to birds, deer, squirrels, and even little crawly things. Tired of listening to the world or to people? Simply push the blue button and you will scan your choices of the FM stations in your area, in truly marvelous stereo fidelity. *PowerVox VII™ (Hearing Mate)* comes with belt/pocket clip and two AAA batteries.

We are the exclusive importers of *RodelVox™* electronic instruments and can therefore bring you this breakthrough product for just $49.95. **But we have an even better deal: *Buy two for just $99.90 and we'll send you a third one, with our compliments—absolutely FREE!*** Hear things you've never heard before and participate in conversation and enjoy the movies and TV as you haven't for a long time. **AND,** listen to a first-class FM radio with brilliant tone and reception as a "bonus"! Order your *PowerVox VII™ (Hearing Mate) today!*

* PowerVox VII™ (Hearing Mate) *does for hearing what binoculars do for seeing. It brings everything 10-times closer. PowerVox VII™ is not a medical hearing device. It is a way for you to experience the world of sound around you—and to enjoy outstanding FM stereo reception.*

You may order by toll-free phone, by mail, or by fax and pay by check or Visa/MasterCard. Please give order number **#1076F345.** Add $4.95 for ship./ins. and sales tax for CA delivery. You have 30-day refund and one-year warranty. We do not refund postage. For customer service or wholesale information, please call (415) 643-2810.

since 1967 haverhills®

2360 Third St., San Francisco, CA 94107

✆ Order by toll-free phone: (800) 797-7367 or by fax: (415) 643-2818 ✆

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mates, especially chimpanzees, as an act of revenge, this is a bit farfetched. It is already widely accepted in the scientific community that African primates are the reservoir of this family of retroviruses, and that SIV was transmitted to man in Central and West Africa and evolved into HIV-1 and HIV-2. The oral polio vaccine hypothesis does not make the animals more culpable—since no one sees them as "responsible" now for the pandemic.

What about the "glare" of unwanted publicity for universities, pharmaceutical companies, and public health departments? Surely none of them enjoys being trapped in such a spotlight, but all of these institutions have matured greatly, and surely they know that cover-ups bring only calumny, in the end, and nothing like a frank and open articulation of error, particularly error that occurred four decades ago. In sum, my bet is strongly against Hooper's hypothesis.

III.

LUC MONTAGNIER'S BOOK carries us away from hypothetical scenarios of the iatrogenic origins of HIV, and back to the actual historical record of the discovery and the spread of HIV. Montagnier, of the Pasteur Institute in Paris, as well as Queens College in New York, is largely credited with the discovery of HIV. He has produced a book that is part autobiography, part personal musing about the events surrounding the early days of AIDS, and part primer on AIDS biology, its clinical manifestations, and its treatment and prevention.

A good deal of Montagnier's book is devoted to the scientific and nationalistic competition that marked the discovery. Teams of scientists around the world were racing to identify the cause of AIDS. The epidemiology of the disease, which is spread by sexual contact, intravenous drug use, and blood transfusions, made an infectious etiology likely. Since T-cells were lost in afflicted patients, it was presumed that the microbe had a tropism for these cells. Most laboratories, therefore, sought to isolate the remaining T-cells from people with AIDS and to examine them, in tissue culture, for evidence of a new pathogen.

The obstacle proved to be the complexity in successfully propagating T-cells outside of the body, particularly in the presence of a destructive microbe that caused their rapid demise. Montagnier's group at the Pasteur Institute secured a lymph node from a man with the disease and succeeded, short term, in propagating the T-cells from this node. Using sensitive and specific assays for enzymes unique to retroviruses, the Pasteur group provided the first evidence that the T-cells harbored a new human retrovirus, which they named LAV. Pictures of the LAV retrovirus were taken, using an electron microscope, and its morphology resembled that of so called lentiviruses, or slow viruses, which were known to cause disease in horses and sheep. Yet the Pasteur group was frustrated in its effort to produce enough of this novel virus for more detailed characterization.

MEANWHILE ROBERT GALLO at the NIH was also culturing T-cells from blood and lymph nodes of people with AIDS. He had long worked on techniques to grow T-cells, and had developed in his laboratory so-called permanent cell lines, or immortalized T-cells that grow in a relatively autonomous fashion. Gallo reasoned that these hardy T-cell lines might be able to support the AIDS retrovirus without being destroyed by it. He requested a sample of the novel virus isolated by Montagnier's laboratory, and (so the story goes) a researcher in Gallo's group, Mika Popovic, succeeded in making the French virus grow on the NIH's immortalized T-cell lines. As Montagnier recounts:

> He [Popovic] was about to characterize it and notified Robert Gallo of this, but was told to keep silent. When ... Popovic called me ... he was careful not to tell me that he had learned how to cultivate our virus on a continuous cell line, and only laconically remarked: I know how to grow your virus.
>
> In late March of 1984, Robert Gallo telephoned me to say he had isolated a new virus that was growing very well. ... In his opinion, it was the AIDS agent. Had he compared it with LAV [the Pasteur virus]? I asked. I could not hear the answer.

In fact, the primary isolate grown in the NIH laboratories that was to be used in the lucrative HIV detection tests ultimately proved to be the Pasteur virus, which presumably had inadvertently contaminated Gallo's own T-cell cultures. This was not realized at the time, and Montagnier says that such information might have changed the presentation of Gallo's work at a press conference held on April 28, 1984, in Washington:

> Gallo, sounding very tense, telephoned me before and after the event. I advised him to make sure to mention the work we at Pasteur had done. In fact, the press conference, as it was reported on the teletypes and later over the radio, proclaimed a great victory for American science. The Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Margaret Heckler, lost her voice at an unfortunate moment, preventing her from reading the paragraph that was supposed to give credit to the work of the Pasteur team. Even after fifteen years, these events still leave a bitter taste in my mouth, even though I am aware that the extraordinary publicity Gallo rallied around his virus reflected onto ours.

MONTAGNIER WRITES GENTLY about this once vitriolic controversy; and his soft tone reflects more than a decade of slow reconciliation. The band-aid was a joint document prepared and signed by the Pasteur Institute and National Institutes of Health in March, 1987, elaborating a consensual account of the discovery and the sharing of royalty rights for the very lucrative HIV diagnostic tests. The clash of egos and the mutual accusations of the "French" team and the "American" team about who deserved credit for the identification of HIV received considerable media attention at the time, and was featured by many journalists as the acme of unsalubrious scientific behavior; and there is little new in Montagnier's recounting, alas, except his very negative view of the superstructure of French science.

Montagnier roundly criticizes the academics with whom he trained, the bureaucrats in the French government, and the senior faculty of the Pasteur Institute. He protests their shackling of young, aggressive, and independent-minded researchers.

> The Pasteur Institute has many talented immunologists. Most, however, are interested only in fundamental problems and work on mice: humans are too "complicated" and the research we wanted to conduct was too "applied" for these researchers, which might seem surprising in an institution founded by Louis Pasteur.
>
> I organized a seminar on AIDS retroviruses at the Pasteur Institute. Françoise Barré-Sinoussi [a young researcher] presented our findings. Being prudent, we only put forth a hypothesis: the virus whose characteristics we were presenting *might* be the AIDS agent. But we were also proud of ourselves, and certain that our Pasteur colleagues would welcome our findings with enthusiasm. The reaction was clearly colder than that. It's "the Montagnier gang" crowing again! said some.

This criticism has some merit, and it is corroborated by the contemporary brain-drain of French (and other European) researchers to America. (Montagnier's own

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

move to New York occurred much later in his life, after he was well established at the Pasteur, and cannot be attributed to a snuffing of his nascent talent.)

But Montagnier's criticisms of French science are just about all that holds his reader. Otherwise there is not enough to make this book into an illuminating assessment of either the process of scientific inquiry or the logistics whereby government, industry, and academia can best coalesce around a seminal discovery like that of HIV. The book suffers from much unexplained detail, in scientific terminology and in the identities of the players in the early days of the AIDS drama; it is inside baseball, and there is no program roster. This is unfortunate. A genuine memoir from a person of Montagnier's learning and stature could have shed much light on the unmasking of the role of viruses in the pathogenesis of immune deficiency and cancer.

THE SECOND PART of Montagnier's book is a primer on AIDS, and it is presented in a fluent and balanced fashion. The unknowns about precisely how HIV destroys the immune system—whether infections other than HIV (so-called co-factors, like herpes viruses and mycoplasma) augment the pernicious potential of the retrovirus, and the differences in virulence among different HIV strains—are all well covered. The impact of the protease inhibitors, as well as the clinical limitations of such treatments, are also accessibly delineated for a lay audience.

Montagnier's focus is on a vaccine, and he clearly articulates the daunting complexities involved in developing such a prophylactic. The virus's exterior coat is so changeable that it quickly eludes the grasp of the immune system. So a person vaccinated using protein from a single isolate of HIV would not be protected from infection by other isolates. Moreover, the initial virus isolate used to prepare the vaccine will likely so change over time as to be able to infect the person. Montagnier also rightly emphasizes that currently ninety percent of all new HIV infections occur among heterosexuals in under-developed countries, primarily Africa and South East Asia, and that health care in such areas is so limited that virtually none of the benefits of combination protease therapy or prophylactic antibiotic therapy against opportunistic infections are realized.

Montagnier does not deal with the oral polio vaccine hypothesis—an indication, perhaps, of how the notion had fallen off the radar screen of the scientific community before Hooper's attempt to revive it. But Montagnier does battle with Peter Duesberg. In forceful language, Montagnier asserts that such unfounded theories are more than parlor debates, because they endanger the health of the people who subscribe to them and who would otherwise benefit from anti-HIV therapy, if they accepted the virus as the underpinning of AIDS:

> I did not think, when I first began writing this book, that I would have to explain once again why AIDS is an infectious, communicable disease caused by a retrovirus, HIV. . . . A few scientists, however, led by Peter Duesberg . . . persist in defending the indefensible—that AIDS is not an infectious disease but the result of aberrant behavior patterns, especially drug use. . . . such a theory can lead to irresponsible behavior and may, as with cancer, prompt patients to seek treatment from charlatans . . . I . . . believe that, lacking a medical education [Duesberg], . . . did not take into account the complexity of this immunological disease of viral origin, and confused the co-factors (drugs, other infections) with the primary cause.

Beliefs can make the difference between life and death. Science demands that our beliefs about disease, its cause and its treatment, be weighed against empirical data; that our conceptions be examined and re-examined under the sharp light of the experimentalist. It is not enough for prominent scientists to invoke arguments from authority, and to rely upon the rhetoric of derision in the struggle against fallacious views such as Duesberg's. The most persuasive rebuttals are those that explain the facts. And the impartiality of science is also a matter of humaneness, because false and fantastical beliefs inflame the psychology of desperation and denial that grips people with serious illness. The only consequence of false hope is true anguish. In the shadow of deathly disease, ignorance does not end in bliss. Reality is not only the domain of suffering and loss; it is also the domain, the only domain, where genuine hope may exist. ■

Promiscuities

By CARYL PHILLIPS

Faulkner, Mississippi by Edouard Glissant translated by Barbara Lewis and Thomas C. Spear

(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 273 pp., $25)

Poetics of Relation by Edouard Glissant translated by Betsy Wing

(The University of Michigan Press, 226 pp., $15.95)

THE CUBAN WRITER Antonio Benitez-Rojo, in *The Repeating Island* (1992), his fine study of patterns of textual and historical discourse in the contemporary Caribbean, points to the relationship between the cultural "impurity" of the Caribbean region and its literature. He observes that "the literature of the Caribbean seeks to differentiate itself from the European not by excluding cultural components that influenced its formation, but rather on the contrary, by moving toward the creation of an ethnologically promiscuous text that might allow a reading of the varied and dense polyphony of Caribbean society's characteristic codes."

Evidence of the truth of Benitez-Rojo's observation can be found in the literature that has been produced in all four of the major languages of the region. In Spanish, there is the evidence of Benitez-Rojo himself, and Alejo Carpentier, and Gabriel García Márquez. In English, there is Wilson Harris, Kamau Brathwaite, and Derek Walcott. In Dutch, there is Tip Marugg,

CARYL PHILLIPS's latest novel is *The Nature of Blood* (Vintage).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Frank Martinus Arion, and Cola Debrot. In French, there was Aimé Césaire in the past, and there are Raphael Confiant and Patrick Chamoiseau in the present; and occupying much of the literary terrain between those generations, there is Edouard Glissant. Glissant's imaginative and theoretical writing perhaps best exemplifies Benitez-Rojo's understanding of the historical pressure that has encouraged an "ethnologically promiscuous" writing to flourish in Caribbean literature.

GLISSANT WAS BORN in 1928 in the hilly commune of Sainte-Marie in Martinique. He received a French colonial education at the Lycée Schoelcher in the capital, Fort-de-France. The school was generally acknowledged to be the best on the island; Franz Fanon, who was three years older than Glissant, was a pupil there, and Aimé Césaire, who had recently returned to the island, was the professor of classical and modern languages. After finishing the Lycée, Glissant travelled to Paris, where he studied ethnology and completed a doctorate in philosophy at the Sorbonne.

Glissant was politically active in Paris, particularly in the *Front Antillo-Guyanais pour l'Independence*, a party that agitated futilely for the political independence of the Francophone regions of the Caribbean. In Paris he also published three volumes of verse, foremost among them being *Les Indes: Poèmes de L'une et l'autre terre*, or *The Indies: Poems from One Land and Another*, which appeared in 1955. This epic poem about Columbus's voyage of discovery to the New World lays bare the rapacity and the greed of that "civilizing" mission, and locates Columbus's Atlantic crossing at the beginning of a tradition that continues to this day—the tradition in which Europeans distort the history of the Antillean world to legitimize their killing of the native peoples and their enslavement of blacks. The poem begins with Columbus's first act of misrepresentation as he declares, "And if the Indies are not where you are, I do not care! Indies you will be. West Indies, so that my dream will be fulfilled."

The first of Glissant's six novels, *La Lezarde*, or *The Ripening*, appeared in 1958. It is a tale of political intrigue set against the backdrop of the elections in Martinique in 1945. It tells the story of a group of idealistic political activists who plot the assassination of a government official in order to ensure electoral victory. The novel is full of existential musings about the emphatically anti-linear notions of Martinican space and time, the twin concepts that, even at this early stage in his career, Glissant believed underscored Antillean consciousness. The novel's discursive form and meandering narrative structure baffled many readers and critics.

The events in Glissant's second novel *Le quatrième siècle*, or *The Fourth Century* (1964) prefigure those in *La Lezarde*, and some of the individuals in Glissant's fourth novel *La case du commandeur*, or *The Overseer's Horse* (1981), are characters who first saw the light of day in *La Lezarde*. In *Le quatrième siècle*, Papa Longoue, the wise old medicine-man of *La Lezarde*, who is a last Caribbean link with Africa, encounters a young intellectual named Mathieu, who tries to encourage the older man to interpret his history in terms of "Western" dates and motives, a reading that the old man resists. In *La case du commandeur*, Glissant traces the historical "roots" of Marie Celat, one of the young radicals from *La Lezarde*, to the arrival of an indeterminate slave-ancestor who probably arrived in the Caribbean around 1715. Glissant's fictional re-mapping of the Antilles involves not only the continuity of characters across the boundaries of individual novels, but also something that distinguishes such fiction from its European counterpart: his affirmation of his belief in the dialectical relationship between hill and plain, forest and ocean, so that nature becomes a central part of his vision.

Malemort, Glissant's third novel, which appeared in 1975, has no chronologically sequential plot line, and the novel ranges back and forth as it contrasts the plight of a newly arrived slave with that of the Martinican bourgeoisie. During the course of this dense and complex novel, many characters are referred to and examined as though they are just one person. This innovative approach to the details of space and time is repeated in the novel *Mahagony* (1987), in which the history of the maroons is linked to the history of the mahogany trees, and by extension to the history of the island as a whole. Once again, characters from Glissant's earlier works make an appearance, including the narrator of *La Lezarde*, who deigns to comment upon his "creator," one Edouard Glissant. Events and relationships are self-consciously blurred in this novel and, true to form, Glissant encourages his readers to dig the tunnels and to build the bridges that link his disparate narratives.

GLISSANT'S LATEST NOVEL, *Tout-Monde*, or *One and All*, appeared six years ago, and it further develops his formally complex historical and literary vision, but this novel, in common with those that preceded it, was regarded by many critics as being somewhat wilfully oblique. It is the "obliqueness" of Glissant's vision, surely, that has led him to pursue his interest in William Faulkner, and to produce a book about him.

Faulkner's universe was defined by the plantation, the twilight zone where black and white met and danced a strange, often highly artificial dance around the inconvenient fact of the other's presence. Ultimately it was a paradoxical world of strained co-existence; a world of cruelty and injustice, but a world in which both black and white had little choice but to recognize each other. At times, the validity of their very existence could only be properly authenticated by the grating presence of the "other."

This fact led Faulkner to the structural strategy that provided the foundation for the greater part of his finest writing. In such a world of vigorously and uncomfortably close relations, there can never be just one story, a master-narrative to which the storyteller (or if truth be told, the historian) can claim fealty. There is always the disruptive truth of the other person's presence, the other person's story. Glissant properly recognizes Faulkner's fiction as a type of writing in which "linearity gets lost," and he admires Faulkner for it. He understood that the quest for purity, for legitimacy, was bound to fail in Faulkner's New World: in *Absalom! Absalom!*, an inseparable tangle of relationships throws a dark shadow across a family, in this case the Sutpens. Try as hard as they might, Faulkner's people can never view their history as simply encounter and transcendence. Southern space and Southern time denies the Sutpens and other Faulknerian families access to such reductive strategies.

WHEN HE WAS a visiting professor in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in 1988, Glissant decided to take the opportunity to travel to Oxford, Mississippi to seek out Faulkner the man and Faulkner the writer. "The Road to Rowan Oak," the first of his seven chapters, begins conventionally enough, with the writer and his family preparing for, and then undertaking, the journey across the state line into Mississippi. Only a few pages into the book, however, the travel narrative suddenly stumbles, and Glissant begins to digress.

One moment Glissant is visiting a southern plantation, and being shown a clump of trees where slaves were probably buried; and the next moment the writer's mind appears to have drifted off into an entirely different world.

> In our countries victimized by History where the histories of many peoples are intertwined, works of nature are the true historical monuments: Goree Island, where all those Africans were hurled into the abyss of slave ships; Mount Pelee, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> the disappearance of the city of Saint-Pierre; the underground dungeons of Dubruc Castle at Caravalle Point, again in Martinique, where those same Africans arrived (at least those who survived the voyage); the Sierra Maestra and the adventures of the Bearded Revolutionaries; and the Caiman woods, where the first oath of the Haitian Revolution was taken, a wood whose trees are scarred by erosion and where the wind yawns no longer.

Suddenly we seem to find ourselves in a lecture hall, trying hard to follow the complicated thoughts of a lecturer who appears to be oblivious of the fact that he has lost his audience.

Eventually Glissant arrives at Rowan Oak, the house in which Faulkner lived and worked for most of his productive life. Once again there is a noticeable tonal shift. Indeed, the prose swells in such a grandiose manner that it serves to obscure Glissant's actual response to the place. "It was as though the aura of his works had elevated the building and its surroundings to a state of splendid indifference, so that they transcended their origins. Can literature make one forget grief and injustice? Or, rather, is literature, and particularly the work of Faulkner, inextricably tied to grief and injustice so as to be able to point them out or fight against them?" But the reader has a different set of questions. Is the house bigger or smaller than Glissant imagined? Is it dark or light? Is it overrun with tourists, or is it abandoned? With Glissant, there seems to be an almost indecent rush to the discourse of abstract theoretical speculation.

WHEN WE RETURN to *terra firma*, it soon becomes clear that Glissant is more concerned with Faulkner the writer than with Faulkner the man. In fact, he is stubborn in his refusal to drift too far beyond the "professional" Faulkner.

> We sit down on the narrow staircase that leads up to the bedrooms. I have no desire to go upstairs, an utter lack of interest in the personal. Faulkner was above all a man who would sit at his desk or conscientiously laze on his veranda. I choose to wander in the garden. He and I are alike in the way we focus on huge ants employed in a task we cannot define or really place, ants like the characters in our works.

It is no wonder that the greater part of Glissant's book is taken up with his own reflections on the writings of his hero.

Those reflections are generally sound, but they hardly add up to a re-drawing of the Faulknerian map. It is difficult to disagree, for example, with this typical rumination:

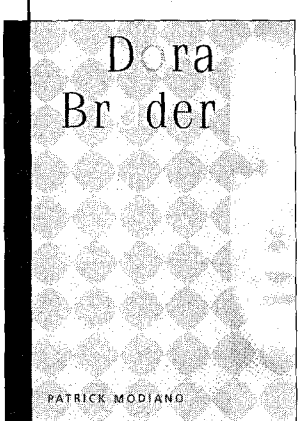
> When Faulkner was writing, what he put at risk was the supreme institution of this Southern community. He questioned its very legitimacy, its original establishment, its Genesis, its irrefutable source. All his works are shaped by an unsurpassable a priori, a question putting everything in vertigo: How to explain the 'beginnings' of the South - this monopoly of the land by Whites from Europe, actually from nowhere, all of them (in the writing) prone to violence? They clearly had no right to buy these 'Big Woods' from the hands of the last Indians, guardians of the earth, who themselves clearly had no right to sell it.

No controversy there; but at the conclusion of such a passage one is left wondering where one is being led. Certainly not towards a deeper understanding of Faulkner, or an original re-assessment of his work.

The truth is, the subject of Glissant's inquiry into Faulkner is Glissant. The further one reads in this book, the clearer it becomes that Glissant's fascination with Faulkner is an unapologetic attempt to understand his own literary concerns, thematic and structural. Being a writer from the "impure" world of the Caribbean, where miscegenation has necessarily contributed towards the identity of the society, Glissant cannot hope to make literature without bumping up against the enormity of this topic. And this was Faulkner's predicament—and opportunity—too. "It is not fitting to assume that Faulkner (whom I see neither as an aristocrat nor as a commoner but as a man of the world) was brutally shocked by miscegenation or illegitimacy. Both loom as the torment to which individuals are subjected ... If Faulkner was not offended by racial mixing, he nonetheless may have thought that it was a potential ordeal for those who bear it. He especially feared (the people in the county feared) the idea of miscegenation." Glissant sees himself and Faulkner sharing a concern with the tangled world of the plantation, which means that they must both embrace the idea of miscegenation, and also reflect upon violence, genealogy, defeat, loss, and a future that can be understood only by travelling into the past.

Faulkner's narrative technique fascinates Glissant, for he has employed a similar method in his novels, so that he might convince his readers of the irreducibility of history to a single story. Glissant's Faulkner, like Glissant himself,

"A hauntingly fetching book....



Dora Bruder
by Patrick Modiano
Translated by
Joanna Kilmartin

Read a chapter from this book online at www.ucpress.edu

$19.95 at bookstores or order 1-800-822-6657

it weaves research, logical speculation, and emotive imagination around a Jewish girl who runs away from the convent school that is hiding her and soon disappears in Auschwitz.... Not a Holocaust memoir or historical fiction but a skillful reconstruction of a life that strides the two genres."—*Kirkus Reviews*

"Modiano makes us hear in the first person, very distinctly, his own literary voice—clear, beautiful, and true."—*Le Nouvel Observateur*

University of California Press

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rejects linearity and celebrates "feeling." "Faulkner suspends the rigorous narrative rules that have dominated Western literature. Through this gap, this suspension, for example, he gives depth to his characters' 'interior monologues' and explorations of conscience." Ambiguity, evasion, speculation: these also are the devices that he has utilized in his own fiction. Faulkner turns out to be a rather Glissantian writer.

Glissant employs these Faulknerian methods also in his book on Faulkner. That's the trouble. Such complications and strategies of indirection may deliver riches in a novel, where the drama of events unfolding (however slowly) and the pleasures of discovering character (however obliquely) can compensate for the writer's peculiarities of narration; but in other forms of writing, such as history or literary reflection, in which character needs to be not discovered but explained, we have a right to expect the writer not to obscure his focus. A little narrativity goes a long way, particularly if the writer intends to dispense with the linearity of time.

IN ORDER TO understand Glissant's stubborn refusal to engage with the "rules" of narration, we must turn in part to politics. Many left-wing French writers have long viewed political activism as an essential part of their task, and some of them have even reached the conclusion that their activism gives them certain epistemological privileges, in that it allows them to be as subjective as they wish in their written work. And Glissant has certainly been active on the political stage. Between 1959 and 1965 the French government, nervous about his commitment to anti-colonial political activity, forbade his return to Martinique and prevented him from leaving France for Algeria.

Indeed, the explanation for the riot of subjectivity in Glissant's style may be found not in the left-wing politics of France, but in the left-wing politics of the Francophone Caribbean—specifically, in the political ideal of the literary imagination that was formulated by Aimé Césaire. In the 1930's, Césaire returned from Europe armed not only with his belief in "negritude," but also with the much more alarming idea that the poetic imagination was in itself a political instrument that might lead to revolution. Césaire believed that the colonial mind was essentially inert and fossilized, and that only a radical descent into subjectivity by the writer could break the atrophied psychology of the Antillean. Because a full engagement with the unconscious processes of memory and imagination had been deemed unacceptable by the colonial powers, Césaire insisted that those were precisely the regions of human thought that needed to be stimulated if there was to be any hope of liberating the Antillean mind.

According to Césaire, a Francophone Caribbean writer had an overwhelming responsibility to be extremely intense in his experience; but this heightening of subjectivity was itself a political commitment. The writer's fantasy was to fly high and wild, and his political commitment would keep him anchored in the world. The dense, often impervious, nature of the writing mattered little, as long as the writer continued to probe his own imagination and to stimulate that of his imaginatively oppressed readers.

FRANCOPHONE INTELLECTUALS, metropolitan or Antillean, have a habit of formulating their ideas at the level of generality, while those of the Anglophone world prefer something more empirical, pragmatic, accountable to reality. At the First Conference of Negro-African Writers and Artists in Paris in 1956, a conference reported on by James Baldwin in an essay called "Princes and Powers," Edouard Glissant spoke at great length. (Other speakers included Alioune Diop and Leopold Senghor from the Francophone world, and Richard Wright and George Lamming from the Anglophone world.) Baldwin remarked upon the frustration and the incomprehension of the morally demanding "Bible-clutching black Anglo-Saxons" when faced with the abstractions of French philosophical thought.

Such intense subjectivity and rampant discursivity will seem even more baffling when they are used as the keys to Faulkner's kingdom. Nobody can accuse Faulkner of easy accessibility, but he certainly never confused impenetrable subjectivity with revolutionary action. Again, Glissant's account of Faulkner sheds more light on Glissant than on Faulkner. But then, Glissant has been consistent across time and across genres; he flouts the old expectations of literary discourse in everything he writes. In 1961, when his play *Monsieur Toussaint* was published and performed, one exasperated critic was moved to comment that "... the development of the plot is not predicated on the chronological unfolding of events as a long chain of interlinking causes and effects. The play records an ever-expanding consciousness that tends to encompass the entire insular space and times. Hence, the text abounds in place names and events that have no significance in the story line." Why should Faulkner have been spared the "revolutionary" style?

Glissant's essays are no different. His first collection of essays, *Soleil de la conscience*, or *The Sun of Consciousness*, appeared in 1956, and was written while he was still in Paris. It immediately established his concern with his own status as an Antillean man trapped within the framework of French culture. He declared his intent to search for a poetics capable of syncretistically joining Antillean time, space, language, and nature into new artistic forms that might more properly reflect the disruptive lack of symmetry that, in Glissant's view, characterized the New World.

L'intention poetique, or *The Poetic Purpose*, was published in 1969, and it includes reflections on art, literary figures, cultural problems, and history. At its center is a long meditation on the essence of language, and on its complex relationship to the poetry that is produced in the Caribbean. In this essay, Glissant insisted on the introduction of new concepts of language to replace the concepts of old Europe. He wished to knock the bourgeois stuffing out of French, to test its limits, to imbue it with new meaning and style. Only in this manner, he argued, will the Antillean world arrive at an aesthetic that can be true to all the realities of the region.

GLISSANT BROADENED HIS canvas in *Le discours antillais*, or *Antillian Discourse*, which appeared in 1981, and added essays on sociology, anthropology, and economics to his literary and linguistic discussions. His aim was essentially the same: to provide a model of how an Antillean person might think with independence and pride in a manner that is not Caribbean, but "creole." To be "creole" means to accept *metissage*, or race-mixing, as the dynamic element in the creation of a uniquely "impure" Antillean society.

To grasp the import of Glissant's idea, one needs first to understand the difference (as he would see it) between "creole" and "Caribbean." Caribbeanness is generally understood to be the process of Americanization that is visited upon those of European, African, and Asian origin in the Caribbean archipelago. In many ways, this Americanization may be seen as a form of New World colonization, so that one can arrive from Spain or Portugal (as was the case with many who travelled to the Dominican Republic or Cuba), and become Americanized without ever becoming creolized.

Creolization involves the vigorous interaction of European, African, and Asian elements to produce something new and unique, on the same shared soil, in the same crucible of history. And just as Faulkner's south was dying towards the end of his life, and being replaced by a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

new order of civil rights and integration, Glissant is similarly worried about the "dying" of the creole tradition, for to this day the French Antilles remain "departments" that must share their identity with metropolitan France. Moreover, there are no more Africans arriving in the region to replenish the process of creolization, and those who do arrive are traditionally Europeans, who are generally very receptive to Americanization as opposed to creolization. It is against this background of an Americanization that is in danger of ousting the creolizing Antillean society that Glissant continues to produce his work, including his influential essays.

Poetics of Relation is Glissant's fourth collection of articles and talks, which date back to the 1980s. (The book initially appeared in French in 1990.) It is a ruminative volume that attempts to map a future for the Caribbean region, a future that involves the region discovering the courage to look the past in the face with neither shame nor fear. Unfortunately, the essays are shot through with the now familiar philosophical ponderings and theoretical digressions, which subvert any possibility of a coherent argument.

Discussing his notion of *echos-monde*, for example, Glissant seems to stir together as many disparate examples as he can find, but after the dazzle one is left wondering about the relevance of the overall point that has been made: "William Faulkner's work, Bob Marley's song, the theories of Benoit Mandelbrot, are all *echos-monde*. Wildfredo Lam's painting (flowing together) or that of Roberto Matta (tearing apart); the architecture of Chicago and just as easily the shantytowns of Rio or Caracas; Ezra Pound's *Cantos* but also the marching of schoolchildren in Soweto are *echos-monde*." Is there anything that isn't? And Glissant's attempts at further explanation—"in Relation analytic thought is led to construct unities whose interdependent variances jointly piece together the interactive totality. These unities are not models but revealing *echos-monde*"—only make matters murkier.

What is clear is that Glissant's notion of "Relation" involves a re-statement of his refusal to accept the Western logic of linear sequence as a mode with which he is prepared to trammel his thought. Time is to be regarded as mutable, and the true creole aesthetic is one that accepts that neither time nor history—in the Western sense—are to be trusted. "Memory in our works," he writes, "is not a calendar memory; our experience of time does not keep company with the rhythms of the month and year alone."

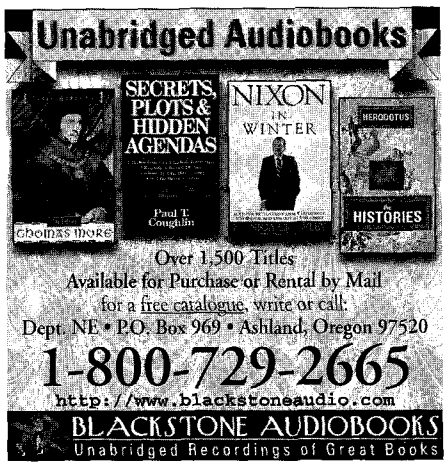
Glissant understands "Relation" to be a synthesizing space in which opposites can live comfortably together, and where, as in the works of Alejo Carpentier, there is little difference between the animate and the inanimate. Glissant detects a similar synthesis in the Guyanese landscapes of Wilson Harris, in which the notions of exterior and interior co-exist as one unity. According to Glissant, this vision of New World space and time first became clear after Columbus's discovery that the world was not linear but circular. In the consciousness of the Antillean world, therefore, time is to be read as cyclical. It is also to be understood that the Antillean world has the capacity to bestow culture upon nature, and the propensity to introduce the seasonal rhythms of nature into the very soul of man.

Not surprisingly, Glissant looks for evidence to back up his theory of "Relation" in the works of Faulkner, who (in this book, as in *Faulkner, Mississippi*) he claims as an essential man of the plantation. But it is among his own Caribbean contemporaries that Glissant is most successfully able to identify the "irrelevance" of the Western construction of linear historical time, as the writers go about their business of creating what Glissant understands to be a fully Antillean vision of self and society.

> Just how were our memory and our time buffeted by the Plantation? Within the space apart that it comprised, the always multilingual and frequently multiracial tangle created inextricable knots within the web of filiations, thereby breaking the clear, linear order to which Western thought had imparted such brilliance. So Alejo Carpentier and Faulkner are of the same mind, Edward Kamau Brathwaite and Lezama Lima go together; I recognize myself in Derek Walcott, we take delight in the coils of time in García Márquez's century of solitude. The ruins of the Plantation have affected American cultures all around.

Glissant uncovers ample evidence of the prevalence of associative (as opposed to linear) thought in the literature of the region, and he bestows upon the artists the responsibility of being in the vanguard of building a new and more relevant society, regarding them as the key architects of a confident, independent Caribbean.

By insisting on the essentially associative character of the Antillean mind, however, Glissant leaves himself open to the accusation that perhaps the people of the Antilles are not capable of logical or "Western" thought (as if logical thought is only a Western



"BILLYBAR SOAPS"
"After Bill Leaves... Let's Wash Up!!!"
Look for Hillary in here too!
www.billybars.com

IMAGINE YOURSELF IMMORTALIZED IN THE POP ART STYLE OF THE 60'S & 70'S . . .
Then Call Us
(630) 953-2033
Brilliantly colored acrylic & silkscreen on canvas.
Neo 60 Studios

WWW.USA.21STORE.COM
GPS, handheld computers and more
1-800-357-6627

CONSIDER THIS:
84% of TNR readers plan to travel in the next 12 months
91% of TNR readers dine out
92% of TNR readers purchased books in the past year
85% of TNR readers contribute to worthy causes
(Source: MRI 1999 Custom Subscriber Study)

PUT YOUR MESSAGE IN FRONT OF 100,000 CONSUMERS!
Contact Shannel Myers at (212) 924-8700 for reservations and information.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

form of thought, and there is such a thing as "the Antillean mind"), and therefore suffered from a necessity for rule from Europe. And that is not Glissant's only error. Even more damning is the suggestion that those who do think in a logical manner, in both literature and politics, are somehow betraying their own people's essence.

Such romanticism, with its simple and sentimental notion of authenticity, does not serve the people about whom Glissant writes, nor does it illuminate their past, their present, or their future. Too much of the "revolutionary" rhetoric of the colonized world has involved the easy embrace of self-serving essentialisms (even as it thunders against other essentialisms) that reject the "West" but offer only myths and abstractions in return. In the realm of literature, certainly, one is all too often left shaking one's head in bewilderment. And in the political arena such romanticism is generally the prelude to a new era of post-modern, post-colonial underdevelopment, which all too quickly segues into civil strife, poverty, and worse.

THERE IS LITTLE in *Poetics of Relation* that will surprise readers who are familiar with Glissant's earlier work, or who have read the essays of Wilson Harris or Antonio Benitez-Rojo. Those writers have already, like Glissant, pointed to the existence of cracks and fissures in the narrative line of Caribbean thought and literature, and attempted to account for the subsequent emergence of "ethnologically promiscuous texts." All three writers would probably find themselves in agreement with V. S. Naipaul's observation, in *The Middle Passage* in 1962, that "living in a borrowed culture, the West Indian, more than most, needs writers to tell him who he is and where he stands." In their similar ways, and in three different languages, they are all embarked upon the literature of nation-building. As Wilson Harris states about his own work (and it remains applicable to them all), he is writing literature "which reads back through the shock of place and time for omens of capacity, for thresholds of capacity that were latent."

In the French Caribbean world, the younger writers, most notably Rafael Confiant and Patrick Chamoiseau, have taken up Glissant's thinking and developed it into their own theories of "Creolite," according to which they view the entire world of the Francophone Caribbean, its language, its history, and its literature, through a single theoretical lens. The avatars of "Creolite" seek to undermine French cultural influence by destabilizing the language, which they accomplish by synthesizing the grammar and the vocabulary of the creole "language" with those of "standard" French. With this new diction, they claim to have created the instrument for a new world vision.

While Glissant's notion of "creolization" strives to concentrate upon process, "Creolite" always seems to be in danger of establishing rules, approving texts, and generally dictating a hierarchy of action and values, all of which appear to be antithetical to individual literary practice. Still, it has not at all impeded the literary practice of Confiant and Chamoiseau themselves. Like their distinguished elder, the younger writers have a radical theory, but they seem able to produce "ethnologically promiscuous texts" that nonetheless rise to a sustained, legible, and affecting dramatic mode. Indeed, the introduction of plot and character into their polyphonic worlds brings to a welcome end the Francophone fondness for "revolutionary" difficulty, the compulsive and programmatic discursiveness to which, on the evidence of these two volumes, Edouard Glissant remains stubbornly committed. ■

The Exhibitionist

By ADAM KIRSCH

Blood, Tin, Straw by Sharon Olds

(Knopf, 127 pp., $24)

TO OVERTURN A repressive regime—philosophical, religious, political—usually means just that: to turn it over, so that what was the most base becomes the most lofty. Society declares that sex is sinful, and so Blake, or Shelley, or Lawrence, declares that sex is sacred; and the attraction of these poets resides largely in the passion of their revolt, the conviction with which they attempt to right a wrong. For this very reason, however, such poets remain trapped within the old categories. They represent an antithesis, not a new synthesis; and they are condemned to the dispensability of all merely partial and polemical views.

If you are ensnared by sexual repression, Blake's simple certainty is a valuable step towards a greater freedom, and even toward wholeness:

> The soul of sweet delight can never
> be defiled.
> The head sublime, the heart pathos,
> the genitals beauty, the hands and
> feet proportion.
> Exuberance is beauty.
> Sooner murder an infant in its cradle
> than nurse unacted desires.

It is gratifying to hear these things once. But it would become tedious if one never heard anything else about the relations between men and women, the darker and more complicated truths that other poets tell. Edmund Wilson touched on this dilemma of partiality in his essay on Oliver Wendell Holmes, noting that the judge believed in "a beardless universe ... it is one of his recurring contentions that it is foolish to revolt against this universe—in the manner of the angry romantics—because man is a part of this universe and cannot differentiate himself from it in such a way as to create an issue between himself and it." The mistake of all radicalism is to embrace such a differentiation, itself conventional and received, for the sake of transvaluing the conventional values. And whenever we find sexual radicalism—the kind which declares sex the highest human activity, and the seat of enlightenment—we are certain to find someone still thrashing in repression's grip.

Sharon Olds believes, unshakably, in a bearded universe. In *Blood, Tin, Straw*, her sixth book, she writes of her "Calvinist lips"; and the major subject—almost the only subject—of Olds's poetry is the fierce and unrelenting fight with a childhood Calvinism, often hinted at in her poems and her occasional interviews. In 1996, she told *Salon* that "I grew up in what I now call a hellfire Episcopalian religion—I think that communicates the atmosphere," and those burns are everywhere evident in her poetry. Does religion say that sex is evil, that the body will return to dust, that the soul is our only noble element? Then Olds will insist that sex is glorious, that the body is the only reality, that the soul can be endlessly defiled.

Olds's poems are about the war of biol-

ADAM KIRSCH writes frequently about poetry for THE NEW REPUBLIC. He is poetry editor of the *Forward*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ogy against theology, about the "central meanings" of her poem "Prayer" (from her first book, *Satan Says*, which appeared in 1980):

> Let me be faithful to the central
> meanings:
>
> the waters breaking in the birth-room
> which suddenly
> smelled like the sea;
> that first time
> he took his body like a saw to me and
> cut through to my inner sex,
> the blood on his penis and balls
> and thighs
> sticky as fruit juice;
> the terrible fear
> as the child's head moves down into
> the vagina . . .

No one who really believed in the sheer corporeality of sex and birth, out of a pre-Christian paganism or a post-Christian materialism, would write about them with such pointed prurience. Olds's aim is not clarity, but blasphemy. She makes this clear in the childish title poem of *Satan Says*:

> Satan
> comes to me in the locked box
> and says, *I'll get you out. Say*
> *My father is a shit.* I say
> my father is a shit and Satan
> laughs and says, *It's opening.*
> *Say your mother is a pimp. . .*
> *Say shit, say death, say fuck the father,*
> Satan says, down my ear.

Olds warms to the role of the naughty child, and tries by increase of naughtiness to bring on some cataclysm in which either she or the god-like enemy would be destroyed. That enemy is a whole cluster of political, social, and religious attitudes that devalues sexuality and oppresses women, often represented by her own alcoholic father, the demon of her unhappy childhood.

THE MOST NAUGHTY thing, of course, is sex; and in contemporary American culture, the only thing naughtier than sex is sex with one's parents or one's children. Across her six books, every permutation of this sin is played out: Olds imagines her parents having sex, and she imagines having sex with her parents, and she imagines her children sexually. Thus "Saturn," in which Olds's drunken, stuporous father is imagined eating her little brother:

> He took
> my brother's head between his lips
> and snapped it like a cherry off the stem.
> You would have seen
> only a large, handsome man
> heavily asleep, unconscious. And yet
> somewhere in his head his
> soil-colored eyes
> were open, the circles of the whites
> glittering
> as he crunched the torso of his child
> between his jaws,
> crushed the bones like the soft shells
> of crabs
> and the delicacies of the genitals
> rolled back along his tongue. . .
> he could not
> stop himself, like orgasm. . .

Or, again, in "The Source," where the performance of fellatio ("to grasp that band of muscle on the male / haunch and help guide the massed / heavy nerve down my throat. . .") is quickly transmogrified into a fantasy about the father:

> myself the glass of sourmash
> my father lifted to his mouth.
> Ah, I am in him,
> I slide all the way down to the
> beginning, the
> curved chamber of the balls. . .

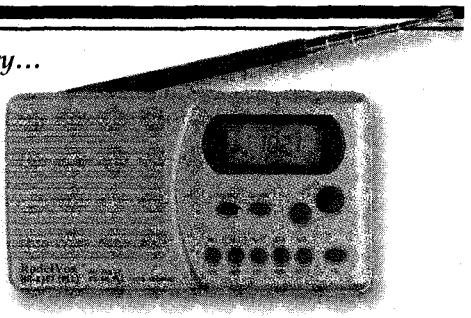
Everything bodily, everything sexual, is hurled at the Father-God, with the fury of a tongue-tied infant's insult. But, as Wilson hinted, the tragedy of Satanic rebellion is a step away from comedy, once we realize that the all-powerful tyrant is a Wizard of Oz—that the rebellion is as unnecessary as the tyranny is imaginary. (The title of *Blood, Tin, Straw* comes from a poem that explicitly connects the Passion story with the story of the Wizard of Oz, but without drawing this damaging conclusion.) The comedy can be seen in the very title of the poem "A Woman in Heat Wiping Herself," from *The Gold Cell*, which appeared in 1987; and such a poem ("the gold grease of the floss / flows through the follicle, beading and rippling back and / curving forward in solemn spillage") suggests that even the most trivial bodily fact can be enlisted in the struggle, which itself trivializes the struggle.

But the most significant problem with Olds's single-minded revolt is that it breeds a disfiguring self-love in the rebel. Her foe seems to her so all-powerful that she does not need to consider whether her aggression is logical or dignified. Her personal struggle is as important a struggle as the world can show. And this all-out attack implicitly confirms her enemy in the power that she would deny it: it is as though the father, or the patriarchy, or religion, is so strong that no weapon can really harm it, so that all weapons can be fairly used.

A breakthrough in audio technology...

MR-318T™ AM/FM/TV Stereo Personal Digital Radio by Rodelvox™ only $69.95*

But read this ad for an even better deal!



There is absolutely nothing like it. This outstanding personal receiver fits in your shirtpocket or fits inconspicuously on your desk or night table. It's packed with features that give you crisp reception over **the entire AM and FM bands and the audio portions of all VHF TV channels—2 to 13.** Here are some of the other great features of this breakthrough personal digital radio:

- PLL Synthesized Tuning
- Built-in Speaker
- State-of-the-Art Design
- Automatic Scanning
- Headphones Included
- Last-Tuned Station Retained
- Keylock Function
- External AC/DC Power Jack
- 25 Memory Presets: 10 AM, 10 FM, 5 TV
- Low-Battery Indicator
- Batteries Included

• *The MR-318T works on two AA-batteries (included). It measures only 5 x 2.5 inches and weighs less than six ounces. Fidelity is astonishing, in both loudspeaker and earphone modes! The maker of the MR-318T receiver is one of the world's leaders in the production of advanced radio equipment.*

We are the exclusive importers of *Rodelvox™* audio equipment and are therefore able to bring you this advanced receiver at the almost unbelievable price of just $69.95. **But we have an even better deal:** ***Buy two for just $139.90 and we'll send you a third one, with our compliments—absolutely FREE!*** Get "shirtpocket" AM/FM reception as you never had before. Catch the audio portion of your favorite TV show, wherever you are: watch the late TV show without disturbing your partner; listen to the commentator when you watch the ball game or any sporting event—and much more. Yes, get a new world of listening pleasure with your ***Rodelvox™ MR-318T™ AM/FM/TV Stereo Personal Digital Radio.*** Order it today!

You may order by toll-free phone, by mail, or by fax and pay by check or Visa/MasterCard. Please give order number **#1074F346.** Add $4.95 for ship./ins. and sales tax for CA delivery. You have 30-day refund and one-year warranty. We do not refund postage. For customer service or wholesale information, please call (415) 643-2810.

since 1967 haverhills®

2360 Third St., San Francisco, CA 94107

© Order by toll-free phone: (800) 797-7367 or by fax: (415) 643-2818 ©

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Olds's rhetoric is pitched at the highest possible level:

> It had happened to others.
> There was a word for us. I was: a Jew.
> It had happened to six million.
> And there was another word that was not
> for the six million, but was a word for me
> and for many others. I was:
> a survivor.

Only a perfect narcissist would casually annex the Holocaust as a symbol for her antipathy to her father. These lines come from her first book, and in her new book there is no such exaggeration; but Olds's narcissism shows itself in other ways, most signally in the unembarrassed use of trivial autobiographical facts, as though anything that happens to the poet should automatically be interesting to other people:

> I knew, all day, that when night came,
> at the sleepover, at Dinny Craviotto's,
> I would challenge Shelly Ashby to a fight
> for picking on Betty Jean Hadden.

> When we took the acid, his wife was off
> with someone else, there was a hole in
> *their bedroom*
> wall where the Steuben wedding owl
> had flown from one room right into
> another....

> Whenever I see large breasts
> on a small woman, these days, my mouth
> drops open, slightly.

Olds has no interest in abstracting from the contingent details of her life to a larger, more universally valid idea or symbol. And she does not see this as a deficiency. It is, rather, a kind of principle, as she told *Salon*: "...just being an ordinary observer and liver and feeler and letting the experience get through you onto the notebook with the pen, through the arm, out of the body, onto the page, without distortion. And there are so many ways I could distort. If I wrote in a sonnet form, I would be distorting.... It's kind of like ego in a way, egotism or narcissism."

This attitude amounts to an exemption of oneself from the difficult dialectic of all art, indeed of all thought—the dialectic that places every mind always already in the midst of assumptions and distortions, and requires that we exchange one set of distortions, not for perfect clarity or perfect honesty, but for another, better set of assumptions and distortions. The belief that one need not engage in this tortuous process is the greatest and most limiting egotism; and of course Olds, so far from being free from distortion, has such a predetermined vision that everything she sees looks the same. The remarkable uniformity of Olds's poems through six books is not due to an uninterrupted intercourse with "reality," but to a narrow and fixed set of premises. Everything hinges on sex; and so, in the new book, we find "The Promise":

> ...we are also in our
> bed, fitted, naked, closely
> along each other, half passed out,
> after love, drifting back
> and forth across the border of
> consciousness, our
> bodies buoyant, clasped.

And "Animal Music":

> I love resting on him,
> dark rest, on the staff line, then I
> love to feel it mount, again,
> as if from the base of matter. My eyes
> were closed, I was in the flesh...

And "Dear Heart":

> I was
> floating out there, splayed, facing
> away, fucked, fucked, my face,
> glistening and distorted, pressed against
> *the inner*
> caul of the world. I was almost beyond
> pleasure, in a region of icy, absolute
> sensing...

There is a reason why there have been so many poems about love and so few about sex, I mean the act of sex; and these examples demonstrate it. Rhapsodies about sex are as little faithful to the phenomenological reality as are clinical descriptions of it. It is only when sex is made to serve as a metaphorical focus for more elaborate and entangled feelings that it rings true, and becomes poetically alive. And since Olds has only one simple and finally unsurprising feeling about sex—that its bodily goodness refutes its social or religious badness—the varied descriptions of sex in her poetry are monotonous. They are also self-infatuated, almost a variety of bragging, as though having good sex is proof of the poet's intimacy with the highest things.

As those hymns to sex suggest, in *Blood, Tin, Straw* Olds is pursuing her old themes in a new emotional climate. The turning point in her career came with her best book, *The Father*, which appeared in 1992. It is a gruesome account of her father's slow death from cancer, offering many opportunities for the disturbing portrayal of corporeal facts:

> The tumor
> is growing fast in his throat these days,
> and as it grows it sends out pus
> like the sun sending out flares,
> those pouring
> tongues. So my father has to gargle,
> cough,
> spit a mouthful of thick stuff
> into the glass every ten minutes or so...

But at the same time this illness is a kind of liberation. The father figure, always associated in her poems with a stifling guilt and a drunken cruelty, is finally killed: he is revealed to be vulnerable after all, not a demon but a man. And with his disappearance, the motive for rebellion also largely disappears. In her work since *The Father*—in *The Wellsping*, which appeared in 1996, and now in *Blood, Tin, Straw*—Olds's tone is less often blasphemous (though there are still moments: "And sexual love, what if it / is mostly sex, the cunt wanting / to swallow, swallow, fiercely sing all / day all night, what if I'm a selfish / fucker feeding on his pleasure"). More and more she insists on the holiness of sex, as the ultimate rebuke to those who call it unholy. The result is a sentimentality that might seem at odds with the anger of her earlier poetry, but is in fact the inevitable complement to it:

> an embryo
> in the belly of a woman whom recent
> loving has made
> musical, the body's harmony
> audible, as if matter itself were merciful.

> we see the blood pour slowly from
> our sex,
> as if the earth sighed, slightly,
> and we felt it, and saw it,
> as if life moaned a little, in joy...

> His eyelid lifts—
> justice, mercy.

This is how Olds has arrived at the fetishism of the ordinary that is so widespread in poetry today. For most poets who engage in it, the detailed praise of the simple is a posture of philosophical integrity, a secular creed: stripped of faith in any ideal or idea, they fall back on the mere facticity of the world, and try to make the facts into a source of joy. Olds's angle is somewhat different. In a positively metaphysical way, she is declaring facts, especially bodily facts, to be good because for so long she was told that they were evil. An eyelid, menstrual blood, an embryo—also semen, sweat, the genitals—become signs of the justice, the harmony, and the joy that pervades all matter. Olds writes pantheistic porn.

But this hymning of the facts is simply another way of bearding the universe, of arbitrarily investing certain precincts of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

experience with transcendent value. Instead of a Calvinist hellfire world in which Satan tempts you to say that your mother is a pimp, there is a sex-paradise, "the world as heaven, your body at the edge of it"; but both these worlds are unsubtle, monotonous, the heroes and the villains clearly marked. Beneath all the surface agitation, all the vulgar language, the programmatically unfeminine sexual bravado, there is a deadening certainty that makes each poem unsurprising.

And therefore ultimately consoling: Olds has a devoted and comparatively large following because no reader will ever be brought by any of her poems to question himself. The reader will congratulate himself on the magnitude of his sensitivity, his openness to the holy in the profane. It makes sense that whenever Olds ventures into political poetry, she exhibits the sanctimony of a certain segment of the left: it is the political equivalent to her poetic self-congratulation, the assurance that one is superior because one can feel an exquisite guilt at society's wrongdoings.

The narrowness of Olds's sensibility extends to Olds's style, which never varies. Long sentences roll down the page in a narrow column; the emphasis not on lines but on phrases, which accumulate breathlessly until the poem finishes with an affirming exhalation. And it is here, at the level of style, that Olds diverges from Sylvia Plath, the much better poet with whom she has some similarities. Olds's blasphemies and affirmations are always in deadly earnest, which is why they are devoid of two of the most appealing qualities of Plath's verse: wit and artifice.

Plath is a much more various poet, but even where her themes are closest to Olds's—when she is attacking her father (infamously using the same Nazi analogy as Olds) or mythologizing herself—she has the power of black comedy in reserve:

> What a trash
> To annihilate each decade.
>
> What a million filaments.
> The peanut-crunching crowd
> Shoves in to see
>
> Them unwrap me hand and foot—
> The big strip tease.
> Gentlemen, ladies
>
> These are my hands
> My knees.

Plath has also the excess of artifice, that margin of language beyond the subject, that defines true poetry. In "Edge," her last poem, she is not emitting a cry of agony; she is doing something uncannier and more terrible:

> Each dead child coiled, a white serpent,
> One at each little
>
> Pitcher of milk, now empty.
> She has folded
>
> Them back into her body as petals
> Of a rose close when the garden
>
> Stiffens and odors bleed
> From the sweet, deep throats of the
> night flower.

It is terrible because, in the moment of greatest agony the poet is still turned outward to the music and the meaning of language, making metaphors and assonances for their own sake.

Metaphor is the one device that Olds does employ, though in the current book there is less of it than in her earlier work. She is at her best when the breathless, ragged pace of the verse coincides with a surfeit of little metaphors, of seemingly dashed-off conceits, to give a real sense of fertility. She sees menstrual blood as an egg "winged with massive uneven pennons of blood"; the buttermilk her father made her drink was "a joke on milk, and a joke on butter." In *Blood, Tin, Straw*, however, there is less metaphor than baroque description, of the sort that in its prodigality tries to endow the most ordinary things with a spurious richness. Taking a shower has never been more elaborately described:

> just step on this
> slatted rack, pull the iron
> handle of the forged world toward you.
> The sluice courses, down your body,
> in a swirling motion, milk smoke, the
> silky rush of fresh water, supple and
> alkaline.
> Eyes shut, you reach for the small
> oil torso of soap...

This glitters, but it is not gold: it is devoid of imaginative surprise or linguistic tension. It is just fancy verbiage.

There are always readers who want the kind of consolation that Olds provides, which is why she is one of the most fiercely beloved of living poets. Her poems are written directly out of the trivia of her life and can be directly assimilated by the reader; there is no abstraction and no surprise, only the videotape of life played back at full volume. Randall Jarrell once wrote that the poems he received from strangers in the mail were like torn-off limbs, with "this is a poem" written on them in lipstick: they were testimony, not art. Sharon Olds's poems are certainly everything that testimony should be: sincere, resounding, unambiguous, consolatory. But just as certainly they are not art. ■

THE NEW REPUBLIC

WE WOULD LIKE YOUR HELP!

If there is a newsstand or bookstore in your neighborhood that does not sell THE NEW REPUBLIC and you think it should, please let us know. Either call us at (202)331-7494 ext. 3402 or send an e-mail message with the name and address of the newsstand or bookstore, along with your name to: Circulation@tnr.com

For Customer Service problems or inquiries please call our toll-free number 1-800-827-1289

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ATLANTA DIARIST

High Low

VISITORS DIDN'T SEEM TO be enjoying themselves all that much when I was at the Norman Rockwell show at the High Museum a couple of weeks ago. I had the feeling that some museumgoers, after taking a close look at these finicky renderings of puppy love and civic pride, wondered why the show had set off a national media blizzard. During his lifetime Rockwell sold an idea—a bromide labeled "The Real America"—and now it's the idea of Rockwell that holds the public. Standing in the first, dark-green gallery at the museum, visitors listened earnestly to an audio tour that began like a mini town meeting: a male voice announced that "if [Rockwell] smokes a pipe he's got to be all right"; a female voice wondered why some critics regard Rockwell "with such disdain." This American conversation was a marketing exec's fabrication, and, as such, it was perfect for Rockwell, that marketer extraordinaire. The pipe-smoking workaholic who died in 1978 at the age of 84 purveyed an earlier generation's version of the kind of equal-opportunity nostalgia that Martha Stewart retails today. Like Martha, Norman understands that the audience, far from regarding his hokum as the real anything, admires such work as the supremely slick fakery that it is. No wonder Steven Spielberg is a Rockwell collector.

ROCKWELL'S WORK, WITH ITS POP-UP verisimilitude and perfect day-before-yesterday historical details, is fascinatingly manipulative. People have always responded, at least subliminally, to his knowingness—to the arched-eyebrow undercurrents of this carefully manufactured populist vision. Now cultural reporters can't resist revving up the old high-versus-low debates, because, when the Rockwell show's national tour concludes in February 2002, the artist's flamboyantly meticulous views of small-town America will be ensconced in New York's Guggenheim Museum, that former bastion of classic abstract art. Well, you can display Norman Rockwell in the Guggenheim, but his canvases still won't have the weight or density or immediacy that makes painting magical. What's missing from these plodding anecdotes is the sensuousness—the visual physicality—that holds a museumgoer. And without some of that rapture a painter is nowhere.

ROCKWELL IS BEING PROMOTED AS A really big artist, as a really complicated guy. A documentary in the PBS "American Masters" series emphasizes the dark side of his private life; his second wife was in and out of mental institutions. His oil paintings, however, are the biggest skeletons in this story; during his lifetime, Rockwell basically kept them for himself, content to send his images into the world as photomechanical reproductions in mass-market magazines. Only after his death did his heirs open a museum in Stockbridge, Massachusetts; and only now is he being presented as an ambitious painter who in life "passed" as a conventional illustrator. The Atlanta show has a postmodern, topsy-turvy, what's-real-what's-not element. Rockwell photographed models, painted from the photographs, and sold reproduction rights to the paintings, which were then photographed for magazines. But now the *Saturday Evening Post* covers, which were the real thing, are the replicas, and the hand-painted originals, which were behind-the-scenes preparations, are the real McCoy.

I AM ASTONISHED BY THE CYNICISM of Rockwell's admirers. Or are the experts, who sound like yahoos, actually in earnest? On the "American Masters" show, Robert Hughes gives Rockwell fancy early-colonial resonances, announcing that the prissy stuff vibrates with utopian Puritan dreams of "American virtue." In the show's catalog, Dave Hickey, a postmodern aesthete who has fans at every cutting-edge art school, subjects Rockwell's 1957 soda-fountain valentine, "After the Prom," to what he must imagine is classical formal analysis. Hickey concludes that this simpering cartoon, with its wanly scumbled brown-and-white surfaces, is "one of the most complex, achieved emblems of agape, tolerance, and youthful promise ever painted." In *The New Yorker*, Peter Schjeldahl, another hipper-than-thou critic, explains that "Rockwell painted beautifully" and finds Rockwell's canvases "surprisingly large, dense, and sumptuous." And, as if that were not enough, there's another contingent—led by Robert Coles—that points to Rockwell's embrace of themes of racial integration in the 1960s and pats him on the back for coming out of the closet as a liberal. Since when does being a liberal make you a good artist?

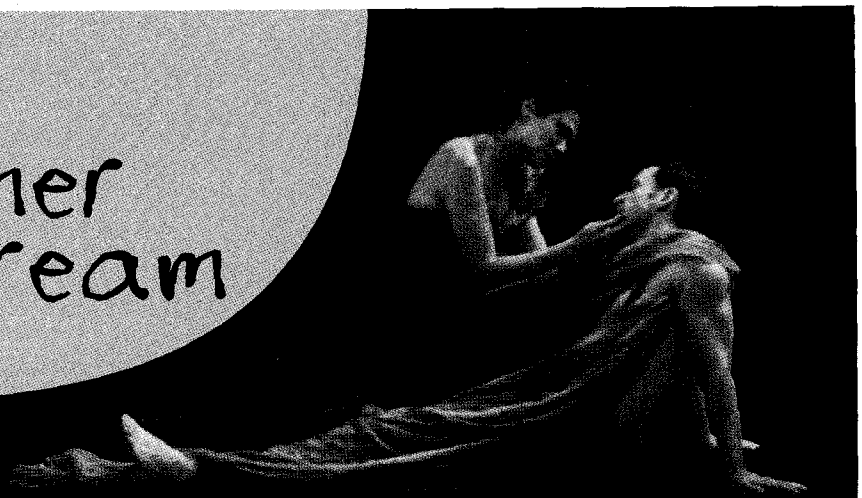
SCHJELDAHL IS ONE OF A NUMBER OF writers who link Rockwell to Andy Warhol; he seems to believe that both artists "raise common images to the pitch of religious icons." I'd put it another way: Rockwell is the perfect product for the museum in the age of Warhol—which is also Martha Stewart's time. The market-driven mentality of so many American museums dates back to the 1980s, when Warholism and Reaganomics were complementary art-world forces, with Ronald Reagan's policies generating the money that gilded Warhol's trivia. Rockwell's magazine covers announce the dawning of the Campbell's-soup-can America in which both Warhol and Reagan rose to fame. Rockwell's new fans claim that his detractors are afraid of good old-fashioned American experiences. I think it's the Rockwell cheerleaders who are ruining our fun. They valorize pop culture; they turn American variety into a debased high-art product. Schjeldahl is tickled that Rockwell is going to the Guggenheim. He is "happy to endorse the notion, which seems ever less absurd as time goes on." I suppose it's true that, after Thomas Krens, the Guggenheim's director, has mounted "The Art of the Motorcycle" and announced a museum-wide Giorgio Armani show, a Rockwell extravaganza is just another clever muddle of Dadaism, populism, philistinism, and commercialism.

IN THE "AMERICAN MASTERS" DOCUmentary, Russell Baker recalls that, as a boy in Depression-era New Jersey, he made money selling the *Saturday Evening Post* door-to-door. It was a tough pitch. He describes out-of-work men who looked at the magazine for which Rockwell ultimately did 322 covers and asked the young Baker if he didn't have something else—maybe *True Story* or *True Detective*. "They wanted to read about vice and adultery," Baker explains. At the High Museum it wasn't vice and adultery that I found in short supply; it was art. This show is subtitled "Pictures for the American People." The people deserve better.

JED PERL

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Midsummer Night's Dream



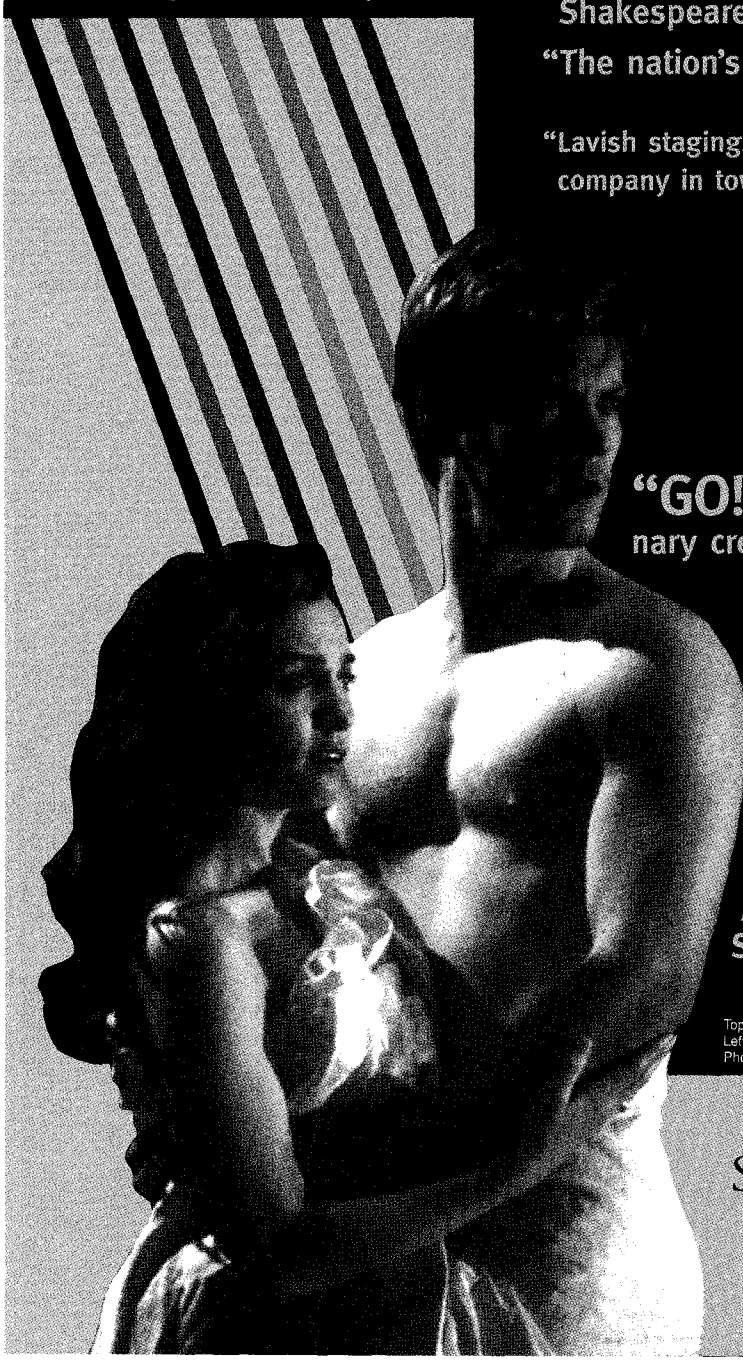
by William Shakespeare
adapted and directed by Joe Calarco

through January 2

"One of the world's three great Shakespearean theatres." The Economist

"The nation's foremost Shakespeare company." Donald Lyons, The Wall Street Journal

"Lavish stagings of modern classics -- the most consistent company in town." Paul Harris, Variety



"GO! An earth-freeing flight of extraordinary creative and artistic imagination!" Roger Meersman, Journal Newspapers

"GORGEOUS! A rollicking good time." Leslie Milk, Washingtonian Online

"MAGNIFICENT! Truly spectacular! A splendid cast and opulent costumes and settings. A highlight of the current season. SEE IT!" Bob Davis, WGMS 103.5

Top: Valerie Leonard and Andrew Long.
Left: Tricia Paoluccio and Gregory Wooddell.
Photos by Carol Rosegg.

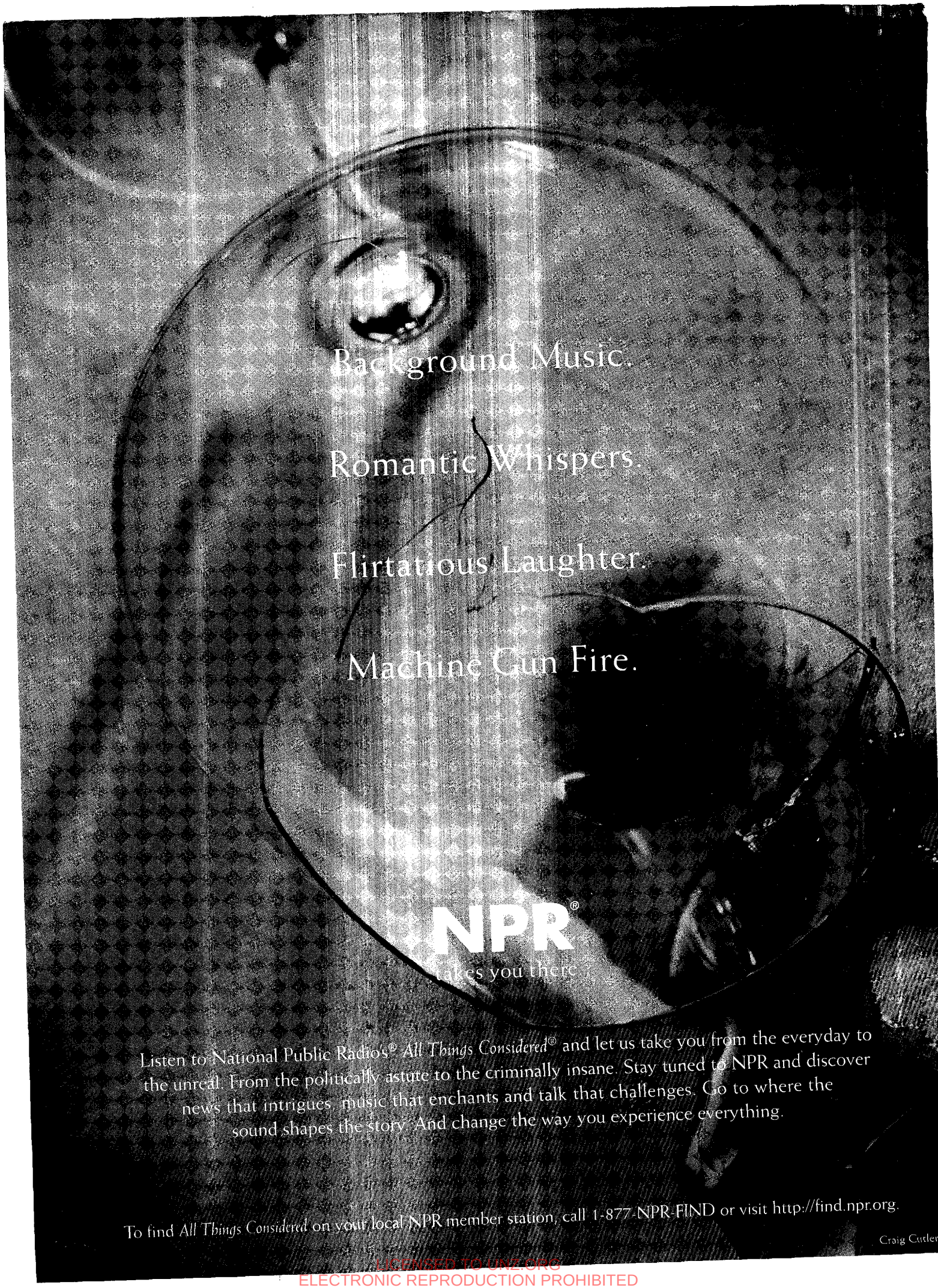
THE SHAKESPEARE THEATRE
In the Nation's Capital

450 7th Street, NW
Washington, DC
www.shakespearedc.org

202.547.1122
877.4TST-TIX
(487-8849)

Media Partner:
Oldies 100, WBIG

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Listen to National Public Radio's® *All Things Considered*® and let us take you from the everyday to the unreal. From the politically astute to the criminally insane. Stay tuned to NPR and discover news that intrigues, music that enchants and talk that challenges. Go to where the sound shapes the story. And change the way you experience everything.

To find *All Things Considered* on your local NPR member station, call 1-877-NPR-FIND or visit http://find.npr.org.

Craig Cutler

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED